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JUSTICE, IMMORTALITY, DANGER AND THE FARCE OF COMMUNION. THE MYTHOLOGIES OF FOOD IN THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN NOVEL

BY

JOHN L. PLEWS

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

IN

GERMAN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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John L. Plews

18 Larkhill
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN40 1QZ
United Kingdom

November 20, 1992

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled JUSTICE, IMMORTALITY, DANGER AND THE FARCE OF COMMUNION. THE MYTHOLOGIES OF FOOD IN THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN NOVEL submitted by JOHN L. PLEWS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in GERMAN LITERATURE.

Dr. Holger A. Pausch

Dr. Raleigh Whitinger

Dr. E. D. Blodgett

Date: Tuesday, November 17, 1992

DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the mythical or ideological appropriation of the primary language system of the cultural phenomenon of food in contemporary German literature. For this purpose it is divided into two parts. Part I (chapters one to three) deals with the method of analysis. Part II (chapters four to eight) is concerned with the analysis proper of four contemporary novels.

The introduction reviews Stefan Hardt's analysis of the eating scenes of Thomas Mann's novels Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg, in which the presentation of food may be regarded as a reflection of society's appearances and, therefore, reveals the threat of downfall and death it tries so hard to hide.

Chapter two explains the semiological theory of Roland Barthes and, thus, the method by which the ideological implications of signs may be exposed.

Chapter three discusses Bakhtin's theory of discourse in the novel in which literary language is considered as an ideological reworking of other extratextual language-systems. Particular attention is given to his treatment of the language-system of the carnival banquet.

Chapters four to eight investigate the mythical or literary appropriation of various food oriented language-systems in the novels Der Richter und sein Henker by Friedrich

Dürrenmatt, Ein fliehendes Pferd by Martin Walser, and Gestern war Heute and Das Hochhaus by Ingeborg Drewitz.

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1. Introduction

Eating is never merely a physiological necessity. Rather, whether as a daily meal, the special occasion of dinner, or just as a quick snack, food is an institutionalized and often artistic expression of a social contract between one person, or group, and another, between one particular human society and the world. In his curiously titled monograph, Tod und Eros beim Essen, Stefan Hardt shows how, in twentieth-century literature, food essentially serves as a subtext to the central themes of the novel. Here, according to Hartmut Böhme in his foreword, food can be analysed as an appetising, cultural and multicoded discourse of appearance. When replicated in both speech and image, it does not in fact indicate any greater understanding of food on the part of the (literary) eater. On the contrary, in its ready-to-eat form, food conceals the integral components of its own culinary procedures. What Böhme considers as "the boredom, philistinism, nausea and fear"[1] of what one is about to eat, is relegated from view in the process of transforming a raw material into something that is not only edible, scientifically speaking, but also fulfils the requirement of looking good enough to eat. In other words, its selection from nature, aesthetic preparation, and ritualised consumption by

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[1]Hartmut Böhme, Vorwort, Tod und Eros beim Essen, by Stefan Hardt (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987) 13. My translation.

humans, all enable food to banish its more negative physiological aspects: that it may lack variety and imagination, that it is essentially dead and potentially hazardous to human life. In this respect, the reader is invited to perceive modern literary eating scenes as "ein allegorisches Tableau,"[2] where the subject of food is celebrated in all its superficial glory, under which, perhaps surprisingly, death may be revealed.

Hardt asserts that when considering the food, no matter whether a lot or a little is consumed, and in spite of, or even as a result of, social practices, an analysis of the eating scenes of the modern novel will uncover a character's inner feelings. By analogy, these feelings are a model through which the expurgation of greater social realities is exposed. For example, in Thomas Mann's novels, Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg, the repression of death and downfall paradoxically results in the multiplication of their presence in the most unexpected of places, for as Böhme summarises, to banish death "heißt, ihn dort ahnungslos zu zitieren, wo sein Terrain nicht zu sein scheint - im Essen."[3] Meal scenes act as the mirrors of society,[4] superficially reflecting its appearances, and yet, if one were to penetrate further beyond the smooth surfaces of the food and into its very constituents, the

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[2]Böhme 15.

[3]Böhme 16.

[4]Hardt, Tod und Eros beim Essen 84.

threat of death may be perceived. The mechanisms of this culinary device will be explained in detail below.

Following on from his investigation of Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg, Hardt continues to monitor his assertion on the contiguous relation between food and death by examining a wholesome selection of novels from modern German, English, French and American literature. Works are chosen in which food appears, not as a central theme itself, but at the level of a subtext, therefore gaining its significance as the expression of the characters[5] and the belief-systems of their society. Concentrating particularly on works from the earlier and middle parts of this century, and admittedly avoiding further novels from the contemporary period, such as those by Günter Grass and Thomas Bernhard, due to "personal aversion," he has left much uncharted ground and many a morsel unsavoured. The question as to whether his theory is still pertinent in the present day, thus, remains unanswered. Likewise, if a food-death scenario is, indeed, as much in operation as ever, then it would be somewhat unforgivable not to investigate further its discursive implications within the context of the novel in which it appears. I therefore propose an analysis of food in the contemporary German novel, not from the perspective of a figurative or thematic function,[6] but as an independent

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[5]Hardt 40.

[6]The thematic function of food has been documented exhaustively by Alois Wierlacher in Vom Essen in der deutschen Literatur. Mahlzeiten in Erzähltexten von Goethe bis Grass

cultural phenomenon: as an ideologically loaded subtextual culinary art within a literary art.

Primarily, however, it is important to briefly review Hardt's analysis of Mann's two famous novels in more detail, in order to explain and assess the means by which the threat of death may be revealed in food. Hardt shows the reader how the physiological fact of eating and the aesthetics of social manners are conjoined in the serving of plentiful quantities of sumptuous food. Mann's bourgeois class takes eating for granted, obscuring it with layer upon layer of social etiquette and luxury, which, in turn, appears to have become equally as irrefutable. However, when analysed from the perspective of food as a cultural phenomenon all of its own, the lavishness and decadent excesses of the eating scenes signify the downfall of that particular class and epoch. Death is hidden in the model of eating peculiar to Mann's bourgeoisie. His characters spend as much of the narrated time dying as they do actually living.[7] Similarly, much of the two novels is preoccupied with eating scenes. In Buddenbrooks there are numerous family meals and in Der Zauberberg the patients' lives revolve around five, often lengthy, meals per day, which leave little time to accomplish anything else.

The conventional structure of the mealtime - congregating around the dinner table - reveals an attempt to compensate for

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(Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987).

[7]Hardt 41.

the isolation the individual feels when eating. By isolation, it is meant that any piece of food eaten by a person can only be consumed once and by that one person alone and, thus, to the exclusion and possible detriment of any other. In its most extreme of circumstances the satiety of one person spells the starvation of another. This isolation is comparable to that when confronting death: one is utterly alone when faced with the fact of one's own death. Alternatively, the death of another only goes to confirm that one has, for the time being, survived. The object, then, of the meal is to lose contact with one's physiological needs and destiny in cultural formality. However, the individual is assigned his or her own place and plate, and so, instead of being compensated for an imperfect reality in comforting appearances, the loneliness of the eater is heightened in the very composition of the meal.[8]

In this way, Mann, the novelist, is depicting (and later, Hardt, the commentator, makes use of) a social precept recognized by Georg Simmel in his essay "Soziologie der Mahlzeit."[9] Here the German philosopher and sociologist maintains that the primitive necessity of eating is elevated by the coming together of a group of people whose focal point is no longer the food dished up before them, but the very sociability of the occasion of eating together. However, as

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[8]Hardt 42.

[9]Georg Simmel, "Soziologie der Mahlzeit," Brücke und Tür (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1957) 243-250.

seen in the paragraph above, food can only emphasise the isolation in the respective individual's need to eat. To overcome this isolation, Simmel suggests that a more harmonising social standardization is initiated in the customs of the conventional meal. All anti-social threats are lost in its regalia of particular food preferences, table implements and ornamentation, polite manners, and trite conversation. These measures ensure that everyone (from a particular class) is treated with an equal share of respect and grandeur and that everything remains harmlessly superficial. It is just such a false construction of society that is reflected in Mann's literary mealtimes. By the same token of superficiality, they become the hiding place of the fall of an entire social class.

To begin with Buddenbrooks,[10] Hardt claims that the eating scenes in the novel announce the social disintegration of the family. He illustrates this point with the aid of the character of Christian, the second son of the third generation, who, he insists, must be viewed in the context of his particularly eccentric idiosyncrasies. This psychological

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[10]Published in 1901, Buddenbrooks traces the fall of a merchant family from Lübeck through four generations between 1835 and 1877. The first generation is represented by the enterprising and vitalistic patrician, Johann Buddenbrook; the second by his pietist son, Consul Johann Buddenbrook, who inherits the principles of the middle class and yet is not so successful with money matters; the third by his eldest son, Thomas, who becomes a senator, and finally, in the fourth generation by Hanno, who is remote from life and inclined towards music.

make-up is the motivation of the following incident when, after having dinner, fruit is served and Christian is confronted with the prospect of consuming a peach:

> Plötzlich jedoch legt Christian mit bleichem Gesicht einen angebissenen Pfirsich auf den Teller zurück. Mit theatralischen Gesten phantasiert er die Möglichkeit, den Kern des Pfirsichs unter gräßlichem Würgen aus Versehen zu verschlucken.[11]

According to Hardt, Christian's actions and the theatrical intensity of his imagination both serve as a preventative prefiguration of the resumption of this scene eighteen years later. Then, when the clown-son returns, his inability to swallow clearly signifies the decline of the family's prosperity. To this analysis, it may be added that the peach, a succulent and golden fruit, sealed in its own soft and innocent vermilion coat, signifies the family's fortune and finery. In returning the peach to his plate, Christian shows how he is terrified at the prospect of being left choking on the hard, cold and inedible stone. He is frightened of losing his wealth and dying in poverty.

The mechanism of deception instilled in food is seen, perhaps at its best, when evaluating the character of Grünlich, the embodiment of deceit itself. This apparently high-flying businessman is originally regarded by the ailing family as a sound venture and future husband for Tony, the first of two daughters in the third generation. Yet it turns out that Grünlich has made some insecure investments and has

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[11]Hardt 46.

to turn to Consul Johann Buddenbrooks to bail him out from going bankrupt. He, however, advises his daughter to file for divorce. Hardt points out that the blond-haired Grünlich initially seems to be a positive figure when he first appears in the natural setting of the garden. However, at the dinner table, and surrounded by a great quantity of rich foodstuffs, a new set of characteristics are inevitably divulged. Underneath its superficial luxury, the food is mushy and sickly. In praising these pulpy components of a meal served in his honour, and which thus acts as his mirror, he reveals himself to be an equally as slimy, self-flirtatious and untrustworthy creature. Similarly, it is clear from the clothes he wears and certain physical features that he is an utter fraud, as Hardt records:

> Die Ingredienzen der Mahlzeit wie 'Muschelragout, Juliennesoupe, gebackene Seezungen, Kalbsbraten mit Rahmkartoffeln und Blumenkohl, Marasquino-Pudding und Pumpernickel mit Roquefort' (70) sind entweder weich oder schleimig, glibbrig oder wäßrig. Zumindest jedoch erwecken sie, selbst wenn man die Speisen nicht kennt, die Assoziation solcher Beschaffenheit. Zu jedem dieser Gerichte findet Grünlich einen neuen Lobspruch. Die Reaktionen auf seine delikaten Hervorbringungen werden ausgespart. So entsteht der Eindruck, als kokettiere er mit sich allein, wie auch das Essen nur ihm gewidmet scheint. Es ist auf die Verdeutlichung seiner Persönlichkeit abgestimmt, komponiert als Spiegel seiner selbst. Die Hochstapelei wird sinnlich spürbar: die ungesunde Verdauung eines Kriechers, der sich mittels glockenförmiger Gehröcke (70), erbsenfarbener Beinkleider (74), grüngelber Anzüge (65) und gelbkarierter Ulster (102) herausputzt, den Dünnschiß seiner Plänkeleien auf den Leib

schreibt, schlüpfrig durch die goldgelben Favoris,
intrigant durchs spärliche Haupthaar.[12]

In addition to this, it must be said for the sake of a modified analysis, that the food has been transformed from its natural state by human interference into something that, in spite of the obvious expense and outwardly lavish appearances, or entirely for these reasons, amounts to nothing more than an extravagant culinary sludge. By playing with the food, it becomes clear to the reader that the family is putting on a spectacle for Grünlich of the standard of expensive tastes and the social status to which he and his money aspire. Yet this, ironically much like Grünlich, is all a façade. The individual dishes are airy creations designed to be consumed as much by the easily duped eye as by the palate overcome with ambition. They are out of the everyday, spellbindingly colourful, fragile and shapely. The permanence of this culinary performance is purposefully misleading as it is offered by a family that will not last. Certainly the decorative structure of the meal will collapse soon after the meal is over, once the objective has been accomplished and Grünlich has been sufficiently impressed. Then it only remains for the now formless leftovers to melt and decay until everything runs into each other.

A further example in connection to the decline of the family in Buddenbrooks is found in the character of Tony.

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[12]Hardt 47. (Page references to Thomas Mann, Buddenbrooks, [Frankfurt: 1960] are in parenthesis.)

Hardt shows how Mann makes her out to be a naive girl in that she must ask the following question: "'Ist ein Ei so viel wert wie ein Viertelpfund Fleisch?' (87)"[13] Clearly the reader learns that she has no head for the cost-benefits of nutrition, and for that matter, for economics as a whole. To remain with the subject of Tony, one may add that, though she loves Morten, she is virtually driven to marry Grünlich for financial reasons. At their wedding a lot of good food is eaten noisily in order to both calm any anxiety and maintain a convivial façade, so as to suppress the fact that the alliance is motivated by business alone. Hardt observes:

> Obwohl das Hochzeitsmahl nur mit einem Satz erwähnt wird, reicht dies hin, um klarzustellen, daß es funktionell überlastet ist. [...] Es 'ward ganz außerordentlich gut und viel gegessen' (113). [...] Die Heuchelei hinter und die Geschäftsmäßigkeit der Verbindung müssen mit schwerem Geschütz für die nervösen Mägen zugeschüttet werden. Der ohrenbetäubende Lärm der Speisen soll das Krachen der Grundfeste und das heimliche Verschwinden des Brautpaares übertönen.[14]

The exceptional effort made in providing and consuming vast quantities of, no doubt, decorative wedding fare, is merely a sweetener devised to cover up the reality that, to misconstrue a metaphor, the family is being sold off to save the silver.

So it is that in Buddenbrooks the original physiological need to eat is lost in the aesthetic staging of the meal, for as Hardt says: "Niemals sind die Mahlzeiten sinnlich

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[13]Hardt 47.

[14]Hardt 48.

aufregend, erotisch, stimulierend, anfeuernd oder von lasziven Gesten begleitet, niemals arten sie in kollektive Besäufnisse oder Völlerei aus."[15] Instead, a mercantile morality takes priority and food, misused to form the very foundations of the false impression, that all is well at home, may be analysed as accompanying the fall of the family.

A similar mechanism concerning food and society is at work in Thomas Mann's Der Zauberberg.[16] In this novel, illness appears as a form of resistance to the creeping decadence of the world.[17] Hans Castorp, the central character and epitome of all that is mediocre in the world, has lost both his parents at a young age and so is raised according to the rigid manners and erudition of his grandfather's generation. This lifeless ideal of the Christian patrician becomes the naturally acceptable norm for the young Castorp.

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[15]Hardt 52.

[16]Published in 1924, Der Zauberberg follows the young Hans Castorp, the orphaned son of a Hamburg patrician, on a visit to see his cousin, Joachim Ziemßen, who is a resident of a sanatorium for sufferers of lung diseases in Davos, Switzerland. He is, at first, alienated by the lifestyle at the institution, which transfers the patients from their usual ordered and disciplined middle-class behaviour to a state of timelessness and oblivion. A cold initially causes Hans to extend his visit of three weeks to seven months during which he becomes fascinated by fellow convalescents, the Italian Republican and Humanist, Lodovico Settembrini, and the decadent Russian, Clawdia Chauchat. The remainder of the novel deals with the rest of a seven year period in which Hans makes the further acquaintances of the Jesuit and Communist, Leo Naphta, an opponent for Settembrini, and the lively Dutch coffee planter, Mynheer Peeperkorn, who serves as a brotherly competitor for Hans for the attentions of Frau Chauchat.

[17]Hardt 53.

Hardt reveals how its austerity and pedantic order are emphasised in the Grandfather's comportment as he eats. He maintains:

> Allein ein Bild setzt sich fest und wird zur Norm, in der vagen Form des Ideals: Der Großvater, 'sehr aufrecht zwischen der hohen Mahoganilehne des Stuhles und dem Tisch, kaum über den Teller gebeugt (und seine) knappen, gepflegten Bewegungen, mit denen die schönen, weißen, mageren alten Hände ... einen Bissen aus Fleisch, Gemüse und Kartoffeln auf der Gabelspitze anordneten und unter einem leichten Entgegenneigen des Kopfes zum Munde führten'.(23)[18]

Furthermore, it is worth noting here that the Grandfather appears to enjoy an almost feudal relationship with the furniture and food about him. Objects are arranged with a measured formality so that they serve him with as little exertion as possible on his part - his hands bare no traces of ever having had to work. In return he takes care to treat the simple forfeits paid to him - meat, greens and potatoes - with all due respect and an obliging nod of the head, so as not to upset the smooth running of this perfect political system which operates almost entirely to its master's advantage.

In the course of his journey to Davos, Hans leaves behind this aristocratic medievalism for the even more propitious world of the modern bourgeoisie. Here a vast and colourful array of foodstuffs of varying richness, and to suit all tastes, is served with invariable frequency. Hardt lists:

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[18]Hardt 53. (Page references to Thomas Mann, Der Zauberberg, [Frankfurt: 1976] are in parenthesis.)

> 'es gab da Töpfe mit Marmeladen und Honig, Schüsseln mit Milchreis und Haferbrei, Platten mit Rührei und kaltem Fleisch ... und eine Schale mit frischem und trockenem Obst'(50), dazu Kaffee, Tee oder Kakao.[...] Hans löffelt Milchreis, die Engländerin trinkt blutfarbenen Tee, eine andere nimmt Kaffee und Buttersemmeln zu sich, das hellblonde Mädchen eine falsche Yoghurt (51f.)[19]

He claims that the heterogeneity of the food not only reflects the diversity of the individual patients, gathered from the respective middle classes of the different parts of Europe, but it also accentuates their isolation which contradicts the very convention of assembling for a meal. The variety and quantity are a sign of one's well-being and vigour and, so, at the same time, are statements of something which is absent. The table companions are drawn by the food into trite conversation and, consequently, become ever more dependent upon one another to expound the illusion of their present state of health. In such a way, then, the assortment of food conceals the fact that the patients, forced together about the same table time after time, are sharing the same miserable fate.[20] It may be added that as the representatives of middle-class Europe, the more devastating lot of their ultimate demise is being disguised by the apparent abundance of pure substances. All of the foods available seem to make a point of their natural state. Nonetheless, they have been sufficiently transformed by their sacrificial presentation -

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[19]Hardt 57-58.

[20]Hardt 58.

in individual pots and bowls, and upon platters and dishes - so as to stress a pious distance from worldliness and an intimate communication, not with nature, but with the self. They are reassuringly soft and sweet; they are innocently white or brilliantly golden; they are chilled and not chilling. However, there is also already a hint of bloodiness, stimulation, and falsification.

Hardt believes the first indications of a certain uneasiness may be traced in the sheer quantity of the food consumed:

> Das Mittagessen [...] besteht aus nicht weniger als sechs Gängen, einem Fisch-, dann einem Fleischgericht, einer Gemüseplatte, gebratenem Geflügel, einer Mehlsuppe, 'und endlich Käse und Obst' (89), so verspüren wir ein leichtes Unbehagen.[21]

Indeed, the patients' conspicuously robust and almost unrelenting appetite asserts the appearance of being alive. However, on closer examination, this mealtime appearance, their greed, by any other name, is shown to be covering up for death. So long as the patients are eating to excess they are convinced that death is the prerogative of others and it cannot touch them, let alone harm them. To give the impression that it is in no way the fate of any of the convalescents, the subject of death is thoroughly banished from the collective consciousness of the sanatorium by focusing on food. Not only would it be a severe social blunder to speak of death,

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[21]Hardt 58.

especially at the table, but it is also general practice to remove the recently deceased from the building while everyone else is enjoying lunch.

Hardt draws attention to the fact that by the first evening Hans finds it difficult to chew and swallow his food. He is only beginning to realise the social aspect of the meal as an accomplice to society in prohibiting the physiological fact of death. In contrast to his fellow diners, he is all too aware of the ominous presence of death in food, as Hardt indicates:

> [Beim Abendessen] bleibt ihm das Zeug buchstäblich im Halse stecken, und in seinem Kopf rauscht es. Erschrocken vom dämlichen Geschwätz der Frau Stöhr über achtundzwanzig Fischsorten, die sie zu bereiten verstehe, vergißt er vollkommen, 'einen Bissen Pumpernickel mit Chester, den er im Munde hatte, fertig zu kauen und hinterzuschlucken. Noch als man von Tische aufstand, hatte er ihn im Munde' (99). Mit Heftigkeit leitet die Zeremonie des Essens die nun jahrelang dauernde Initiation ins Unbekannte ein.[22]

A further assessment of the situation reveals that Hans, not unlike Christian earlier, is unable to swallow his food as he is terrified at the prospect of dying. Having just arrived from a rigid, if not entirely stable background, he shows himself still to be inexperienced in the trivial banter necessary to uphold middle-class life. The more information that is supplied about food (and the greater the number of dishes on offer) may well mean that one is eloquently versed in the final presentation for the eating of foodstuffs.

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[22]Hardt 60.

However this actually entails the less one really knows why and what one is eating and, subsequently, the more one is removed from the physiological limits of life (namely, birth and death). In his ineptitude, Hans is forced to focus upon the food source itself instead of the very sociability of the occasion of eating and, so, becomes isolated from the people about him. He is thus the only person to feel nauseated by the idle chatter about a relentless variety of fish recipes, which to him, would logically require a large number of slippery, flapping, stinking, rotting, decapitated and gutted fish. Hardt, however, does point out that Hans combats the social and inner decay he witnesses with his ability to reason, for later we learn that he is, supposedly, not oppressed by death, but that he actually has an inkling for it as one of "life's aesthetic arrangements."[23]

So it is that the patients of the sanatorium are only happy so long as they are able to maintain the illusion that they are eternal. This can only be achieved by either talking about food or, better still, gorging until one's stomach is thoroughly stuffed. However, this decadence must soon come to an end in the First World War and the Russian Revolution, both subtly anticipated throughout the novel in the military ambition of Hans' cousin, Joachim Ziemßen, and the coming and going of the "barbaric" Russians. As Hardt suggests, these two events will prove, beyond any further doubt, the unequivocal

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[23]Hardt 61-62.

superfluity of the unproductive middle class.[24] To convey this reality, the character of Mynheer Peeperkorn, a vitalistic and fraternal Dutch coffee planter, appears on the scene.

Hardt describes that, as an accompaniment to every main meal, Peeperkorn drinks between one and two bottles of red wine. Indeed, it is only on such occasions of eating and drinking that he is able to perceive the fact of his own existence because "nur dann vermag er 'den Anforderungen des Lebens gerecht zu werden.'"[25] In his incessant compulsion to eat, as well as his concerted laughter, his uproarious temper, and penchant for fun and games, Peeperkorn clearly betrays himself as the jesting manifestation of his class' fear of death and social extinction. Only ever able to speak in half sentences, though considering them complete, his language becomes the medium of his frustrated sexuality.[26] In contrast, where food is concerned, his taste buds are insatiable and, consequently, his sex drive can only be regarded as forever on the up. Hardt illustrates the point:

> Zum Dank bestellt [Peeperkorn] Champagner und petit fours, 'köstliche, kegelförmige kleine Schlemmerbissen mit farbigem Zuckerguß überkleidet, von zartestem Biskuitcharakter, im Innern benetzt von Schokoladen- und Pistaziencreme und auf Papierdeckchen mit reichem Spitzenrande angeboten. Frau Stöhr leckte sich alle Finger bei ihrem Genuß'

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[24]Hardt 67.

[25]Hardt 68.

[26]Hardt 70.

> (691). Das 'eiskalte, duftige Geprickel' (691) elektrisiert die Mägen, die Augen beginnen zu glitzern. [...] Doch Mynheer ist es immer noch nicht genug. Er läßt Kaffee kommen, Mocca double, flüssiges 'Brot', Apricots, Brandy, Chartreuse, Creme de Vanille, Maraschino und später noch saure Fischfilets, Bier dazu, Tee, sowohl chinesischen wie Kamillentee, und 'Schweizer Roten von naiv-spritziger Art' (692), zu dem er sich nach Mitternacht 'durchgeläufert' hat. Nun zeigt er sich 'verliebt in all und jede erreichbare Weiblichkeit, wahllos und ohne Ansehen der Person' (693).[27]

It would not be wrong to say that Peeperkorn is desperately attempting to live life to the full by celebrating as much as possible, now that he is confronted with the dismal reality of his own death. At this point, however, Hardt fails to emphasise how Peeperkorn is clearly going for the grotesque, for his is no ordinary feast. His choice of foodstuffs is frilly, flamboyant and flirtatious. He smothers himself in the most exuberant and refined luxuries of the rich and flagging bourgeoisie, as well as the profane excesses, exaggeration and vulgarity of the wild and colourful, popular carnival. In such a way, he tries to seduce people and their elevated ways in a parodistic spectacle in order to return them to the common truth - that they are at odds with the world and that, rather than cover things up in finery, they must struggle not to die. Drawn to this sudden burst of gaiety, the other convalescents try their best to keep up with Peeperkorn's immoderation only to disperse in confusion when it is announced that Hofrat Behrens is on his way. As the institution's chief physician,

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[27]Hardt 70.

Behrens most represents the official codes of behaviour of his privileged patients and immediately reinstates the sense of oblivion they pay for. Peeperkorn is then carried to his room and not insignificantly by Hans Castorp and Frau Chauchat, the young man's undisclosed "paramour."

Hardt comes to the conclusion that, in contrast to the Nineteenth Century, where the meal had easily discernible erotic overtones, food in modern literature decays into becoming an accessory to content, that it reveals exactly the character's fear of death. In addition, it may be said that food is no longer used metaphorically, as a symbol of, for example, wealth and status, fantasies or desires. Instead, meal scenes are realistic simulations of an actual environment: they are metonymic. Food has become the virtual reality of that very wealth and status, those fantasies or desires. On closer examination, it has been seen that all of this is in a state of decay.

Before extending Hardt's analysis of literary food in relation to its subtextuality in the contemporary period, it would be helpful to place this modern theorist in a larger semiological framework. Albeit essential to understanding Hardt's technique, Georg Simmel's brief sociological study of the function of the meal, as mentioned above, is but one influence on the type of approach to food in novels that is proffered. Though the reader's attention may be drawn to the occasional endnote, in claiming that eating scenes are woven

into a multitude of (cultural) expression and that their significance is only revealed in their treatment,[28] Stefan Hardt's work bears much inescapable allegiance to the social critique of the French structuralist theorist, Roland Barthes. The following chapter will seek to explain this semiological theory along with the ideological implications it endeavours to expose.

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[28]Hardt 40.

2. Barthes, Sign-Systems and the Lie of Myth

In the essay "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign," compiled by Ferdinand de Saussure's students from their lecture notes, the influential Swiss linguist shows how there is both a somewhat incidental acoustic and a highly complex social side to language. He explained that arbitrarily constructed language becomes fixed by the conventions of collective behaviour, and, therefore, these "collective representations" may be considered as "sign-systems" that express ideas. In Mythologies, however, Roland Barthes, hoped to go one step further than Saussure. He wanted to reveal the latent ideology of these sign-systems - the hidden messages of that part of language which seems obvious or "goes-without-saying." He proposed to achieve his objective by "accounting in detail for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature."[29] To this effect, he presents a series of short essays concerning various everyday phenomena. These range from professional wrestling to Hollywood movies, from soap-powder advertisements to political election campaigns, as well as the belief-systems instilled in food and drink. The primary intention of this chapter is to explain Barthes' theory and, thus, the method by which the

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[29]Roland Barthes, "Preface to the 1970 Edition," Mythologies (1957; English trans. Annette Lavers 1973; Rpt. London: Paladin, 1985) 9. By "mystification" Barthes denotes the meaning added to everyday phenomena.

hidden ideology of sign-systems may be revealed. In doing this, Hardt's theory concerning food in the modern novel will be allotted its place in a larger semiological framework.

Barthes states categorically that wine, for the French, is synonymous with their culture.[30] To sip at a glass of wine is to drink the very notion of France and all that is French. In contrast to the whisky and beer drinking British and most other nationalities, Barthes maintains that the French drink for pleasure and not simply for the sake of getting drunk. However, he discloses that this is a universal decorative gesture, or conformism, which denotes a certain "collective morality." This collective morality of the consumption of wine is, in turn, identified as an ideology or myth which serves as a mask for the exploitative workings of French capitalism. To illustrate his point, Barthes provides the example of the growing of the grape in the French colony of Algeria. Here the indigenous population is Muslim, and so abstains from drinking alcohol. Having absolutely no need of the wine, which requires, for its production, the most vital tracts of land, the Arab population is deprived, by their foreign overlords, of the very soil which could be put to better use in cultivating the basic crops needed to feed them.

Similarly, Barthes insists that, in French culture, a rare steak signifies strength.[31] Full-bloodedness is the

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[30]Barthes, "Wine and Milk," Mythologies 58-61.

[31]Barthes, "Steak and Chips," Mythologies 62-64.

nature and nationalised morality of steak, its redeeming and transforming quality. The fervently patriotic nostalgia moderately cooked into steak is, once again, its ideology or myth, which provides the Frenchman with, at the very least, the feeling of irrefutable integrity and impregnable superiority.

Barthes also examines the photographs of prepared dishes featured every month in the glossy magazine, Elle.[32] Here he observes that the principal category presented "is that of the smooth coating: there is an obvious endeavour to glaze surfaces, to round them off, to bury the food under the even sediment of sauces, creams, icing and jellies." Barthes maintains that Elle is indispensable, for it provides its working-class readership with the exact degree of middle-class smartness to which it aspires. He therefore insists that the purpose of the ornamentation is to beautify and so, in turn, conceal the very affordability of the foodstuffs being shown. Elle takes care not to offend its readers by presenting them with something which is utterly within their financial means. Instead they are provided with the opportunity, literally, to consume bourgeois norms by fiction: by seeing pictures of their dreams. Here it is the consumption of the idea which is of the utmost importance for maintaining the status quo and avoiding the sticky subject of economic disparity between the classes.

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[32]Barthes, "Ornamental Cookery," Mythologies 78-80.

To see how Barthes reaches such conclusions from these highly graphic examples it is necessary to turn to the theoretical part of his work: "Myth Today."[33] First Barthes briefly discusses the structure of myth: its semiology. Myth is identified by Barthes as a "communication system" or "message," which is defined not so much by the object at the centre of the given discourse - therefore severing any link with reality -but by the form in the message. Already it is clear that he intends giving more weight to the social side of the construction of language in perceiving myth as a form devised by adding "social usage" to "pure matter." The myth of steak, let it be recalled, takes the form of adding the message of nostalgia and patriotism to the object of steak.

Myth thus relies on various aspects of human history. Given that history is constantly evolving, it must be noted that these aspects are by no means constant or eternal. Consequently, they may create, destroy, and re-establish a myth by altering its social usage at any moment deemed suitable by that part of society which controls our understanding of history. Barthes considers this group, particularly where France is concerned, to be none other than the land-owning and industrial bourgeoisie. However, this point will be discussed below when this explanation deals more with usage. To remain with the semiological structure, it is important to point out that the historical aspect of myth is

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[33]Barthes, "Myth Today," Mythologies 109-159.

presupposed by a "signifying consciousness." Myth depends upon and arises from one's consciousness of the primary semiological system of language.

Barthes makes use of the terminology of Saussure's semiological system to clarify, what he calls, his science of "ideas-in-form." He begins with the pre-existent system of language which is comprised of the relationship of equivalence in which pure matter, or signifier, expresses social usage, or signified. The speaker or reader grasps the sum of these two terms: the sign. Barthes demonstrates this system with the example of a bunch of roses. To the "empty" signifier, roses, one adds the signified, the "distinction" of passion, and obtains the sign, "passionified" roses. The roses are now considered "full" of meaning. Further examples concerning food may be given: 1) the empty signifier champagne plus the signified distinction of achievement equals the "meaning-full" sign of "achieving" champagne; 2) a box of chocolates plus love and respect equals a box of "loving and respectful" chocolates; 3) the potato plus working-class tradition equals "traditionalised," working-class potatoes. It is worth pointing out here that the box of chocolates, for example, is not merely symbolic of love and respect, it does not simply allude or invoke, but actually takes on board that love and respect: it is the simulacrum, or the virtual reality, of these feelings.

In the above primary semiological system, or "language," the signifier is identified as the mental acoustic image and the signified is the concept, which is added to the object of that image. As these two aspects may be seen as separate only in theory, the sign is one's practical or concrete experience of the relation between the image and the concept. From this Barthes begins to construct a means of analysis for the overlapping "second-order semiological system." The metalanguage, or myth, of all utterance is seen to be an extension from the original linguistic order. The sign of the first order is "emptied" of its history to become the signifier of the second mythical order. This may be seen as an equation. a) The linguistic signifier / acoustic image + b) the linguistic signified / concept = c) the linguistic sign. Then, c = d) the mythical signifier.

In an attempt to exemplify his theory, Barthes turns his attention away from the structure of language to concentrate more on usage: its ideology. To extend Saussure's system, and to further clarify his own theory, Barthes provides us with the example of a front cover from Paris-Match, which depicts "a young Negro in a French uniform [...] saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour."[34] Here, the image of a Negro giving a military salute added to the concept of French imperiality enables us to grasp the picture's meaning at the primary linguistic level: the

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[34]Barthes, Mythologies 116.

Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute. However, as Barthes points out there is a further mythical, or ideological, layer of experience: "that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors."[35] Thus a "second order semiological system" is at work covering up the various political and military crises in French colonial territories. In this way, one sees how myth is called upon to serve as an alibi to present norms.

In order to distinguish the two overlapping semiological systems from one another, Barthes introduces a few supplementary terms. The signifier and signified in the linguistic system remain as such. The linguistic sign, however, is now referred to as meaning, for example, the Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute. The signifier of the mythical system becomes known as the form, it is equal to the emptied linguistic sign. The mythical signified is the same as the linguistic signified, but shall be known as the concept for the sake of clarity between the two orders. Finally, the mythical sign is given the term, signification. The earlier equation may be expanded to read as follows. a) The linguistic signifier [Negro giving salute] + b) linguistic signified [French imperiality] = c) linguistic meaning [Frenchness of

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[35]Barthes, Mythologies 116.

Negro giving salute]. Then, c = d) mythical form [Frenchness of Negro giving salute]. Finally d + e) mythical concept [French imperiality] = f) mythical signification [myth of French greatness].

Barthes continues by pointing out that the form of myth is not symbolic of the concept: "the Negro who salutes is not the symbol of the French Empire."[36] However, this form is emptied of any meaning, or, as it were, any independent history to that required by the concept, and is then "reconstituted" to represent that concept. In other words, the Negro who salutes stands for French imperiality as an accomplice to its intentions. In the transition from being the meaningful sign of the linguistic system to becoming the empty signifier of the mythical system, the form of the Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute undergoes, to borrow a political term, a process of misinformation. In a sense, a lie is being built into the form as the knowledge from meaning is being purposefully lost. Instead of coming from meaning, knowledge is now supplied almost entirely by the concept. Where the case of the Negro soldier is concerned, it can be seen that greatness replaces racism and colonialism. The matter of this lie will be discussed in further detail below.

Meanwhile, and not unrelated to the inherent lie of myth, Barthes draws a parallel to Freudianism with the remark that the linguistic signified is the "latent meaning" of the

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[36]Barthes, Mythologies 118.

system, and that, in the second order, the concept is considered as the "real meaning." The word "meaning" as it is used here is not to be confused with Barthes' usage as an alternative name for the linguistic sign. In this case it stands for the "very intention of behaviour."[37] It is this intention of the concept which accounts for the signification or myth. Though nothing is hidden by the myth, the concept distorts the original (full) meaning of the (empty) form to please its own ends. "Real meaning" is thus a "distorted meaning." This is only possible as the mythical form is presupposed by a linguistic system. For example, the Senegalese Negro is deprived of his independent history by the picture of his salute. This primary discourse - that Senegal is a colony of France, that there is unrest in the French colonies, that the French government has had to quell this unrest by military force - has all been distorted or obscured by the message of the greatness of French imperiality in the gesture of the salute.

At this point Barthes comes to the crux of his critique. He maintains that the historical intention which determines the myth is "made absent." Somehow it appears to us as an unquestionable matter of fact that a Negro's salute should act as "an eternal reference meant to <u>establish</u> French imperiality."[38] The concept (French imperiality) "steals" the

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[37]Barthes, <u>Mythologies</u> 119-120.

[38]Barthes, <u>Mythologies</u> 125.

linguistic meaning of the form (Frenchness of a Negro giving salute) and restores it as a distorted meaning or myth (French greatness). So it is that the two orders may be differentiated in that linguistic signs, as Saussure originally maintained, are arbitrary or unmotivated, whereas mythical signification, according to Barthes, is always motivated. There is always a reason for myth in that it is meant to portray a particular event from a specific angle. It is in this light that a concept is seen to take hold of the (empty) form - which is both linguistically presupposed and mythically distorted - and make an analogy between it (form) and its motivating meaning supplied by history. It can be said then that myths are inevitably politicised. As seen above the saluting Negro is made to comply with the intentions of French imperiality.

Myth, then, serves history, which, according to Barthes, in spite of all its apparent political, economic and social changes, is geared towards and belongs firmly to bourgeois society. He thus clearly accepts a Marxist outlook of history. Here lies the essence of the work. Barthes is attempting a social critique of the universal nature of petit-bourgeois culture. He continues by maintaining that the name of the bourgeoisie exists openly on the economic plane, in the form of blatant capitalism, barely politically, and not at all where ideology is concerned. Its name disappears as one moves from the sphere of economic reality to representation. As a result, Barthes asserts that virtually every daily utterance

may be regarded as a text loyally representing bourgeois ideology without ever naming it. The West is utterly:

> steeped in this anonymous ideology: our press, our films, our pulp literature, our rituals, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear, everything, in everyday life, is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie has and makes us have of the relations between man and the world.[39]

In other words, with myth in the hire of bourgeois ideology, middle-class norms are silently taken for granted by everyone. They "go-without-saying" and become "natural" for the whole of society. It is by means of the deluge of texts or discourses (largely mass media, film and literature) that the bourgeois game of displaying and consuming one's wealth becomes the norm dreamed of, if not actually lived out by, the rest of society. This effect was witnessed in the case of ornamental cookery, where the lower middle class is able to attain bourgeois status only through its imagination, which, conveniently for the bourgeoisie, masks a particular material inequality. To conclude this matter, it may be said that so long as aspirations are satisfied in one form or another, that is, if not in reality then in one's imagination, the structure of society will be maintained as it is. Here lies the overriding function of myth: it is designed specifically to conserve an existing hierarchy.

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[39]Barthes, Mythologies 140.

A certain circularity may be traced in Barthes' discussion of everyday mythologies. Myth, it is maintained, is first driven by an apparently absent historical intention and then, in order to serve bourgeois history, it draws upon, empties and distorts an historical reality from the world which it returns as a false, yet "natural," image of that very reality. This copy is taken utterly for granted and has no historical significance. With history in a state of constant change, a variety of motivations are possible. However only one particular motivation will ever be chosen to fill the historical gap between the two orders and this will always depend on the situation of the second, that is the ideology and not the structure of a language. As Barthes cleverly maintains: "The function of myth is to empty reality: it is [...] an evaporation, in short, a perceptible absence."[40] The function of myth is essentially to lie about historical reality: to show how France's colonial subjects serve the Empire with undivided devotion, and are not exploited at all. France's greatness is a lie implemented to cover up for racial injustice. Barthes points out that myth does not deny the concept of the form (French imperiality in the case of the Negro soldier). Rather, it discusses it in such a way as to state it as a naturally justified fact for which any explanation would be superfluous. To understand the workings of myth, Barthes proposes that one should examine the form

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[40]Barthes, Mythologies 143.

(the mythical signifier), that is to say, that which has been plundered of its historical meaning, and to do this "from the point of view of the language-object, that is, of the meaning."[41] This will return the structural investigator to the historical reality of meaning before it becomes distorted by ideology.

The interest of this study, however, also lies in the field of that very distortion of the meaning of the language-object, the linguistic sign, by the second order. As Barthes insists, "myth is speech stolen and restored."[42] He maintains that only the speech which is restored is no longer quite the same as it was before meaning was stolen, for it occupies a new province devoid of its source. Myth is therefore language which is marked by an absence of real meaning and is overweight with the particular social intention of misinformation. In this respect, in his essay entitled "The Structuralist Activity," Barthes maintains that myth is "not [...] an original 'impression' of the world, but a veritable fabrication of a world which resembles the first one, not in order to copy it but to render it intelligible."[43] The world, or object, is thus fabricated in speech - it is not simulated

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[41]Barthes, Mythologies 145.

[42]Barthes, Mythologies 125.

[43]Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," Critical Essays (Northwestern U P , 1972) 213-220, rpt. in Contemporary Literary Criticism, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York: Longman, 1989) 170-174: 171.

exactly as it is, rather it is, so to speak, plagiarised and assigned a new meaning by human society. Evidently, one may suggest that Barthes believes that humanity, consciously or otherwise, operates within systems of creating truth which enable it to lie about the world to suit its own ends.

Having now revealed the hidden ideology of myth and wanting to pursue this line of thought, it is necessary to return briefly to Stefan Hardt's investigation of the relation of food, decadence and death in the modern novel. A summary, therefore, of the introduction of this work will provide the necessary material to lay bare the basis of myth in modern literary language in particular.

The introduction discussed how Hardt maintains that food in modern literature may be analysed as the scene of the inner moods of the characters. The middle-class society of Thomas Mann's novels was seen to have created a mythological structure of eating, in which the negative, primitive, physiological role of food is distorted within human perception by the new framework of a meal. It was thus seen how the social occasion, and its subsequent conquering of an individual's isolation and fear of death, takes precedence over the fact of eating the food. The original necessity to eat and the sustaining qualities of food are therefore distorted to establish, as in the case of Mann's bourgeoisie, the myth of immortality. The individual members of society may or may not have any understanding of this process. Indeed, it

is likely that they take the gestures of their own behaviour for granted.

In this respect, I would like to propose that food may be regarded as a language, which has been stolen and restored to convey a myth, which in Mann's two works is that of everlasting life. This lie is then taken for granted. Indeed, by returning to the form of food, that is, its display as part of the fabrication of the meal, from the point of view of its meaning, or ingredients, it was seen that this original historical meaning was plundered in the name of a certain ideology. The very hazard of death in food, say, that it is itself dead and thus conveys a message of mortality, is hidden by the culinary events of processing and presentation. This is analogous to an act of denial from which a dialectic of death may be regarded as underlying the basis of myth.

Hardt states that death is a taboo whose truth is eloquently represented by eating.[44] Equally, it is the very fear of death, and the desire to escape it, which become the motivating force of existence.[45] Put simply, when aware of one's own death one begins to live life to its full potential. This often implies an increase in appetite and sex drive, an aspect which was most noticeable in the character of Peeperkorn in Der Zauberberg. In addition, however, the opposite is also found to be true. If one believes in the

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[44]Hardt 26.

[45]Hardt 27.

mythology of immortality conveyed in the modern novel, for example, by the social functioning and not the physical necessity of food, then death is no longer a part of life and one is content with apparent timelessness and oblivion. It would then be the case that life's possibilities would not be realised. The vast majority of the patients in the institution in Davos are evidence enough of this point. Indeed, as Hardt correctly observes, only when one is aware of dying, that is, of the boundary between life and death, is one capable of the continuation of being: "Nur am Umschlagspunkt zwischen Tod und Leben, dort, wo die Grenze wie die Schneide eines Messers sinnlich erfahrbar bleibt, vermag der Mensch sich der 'Kontinuität des Seins' zu versichern."[46]

The dialectic of death and downfall underlying Thomas Mann's eating scenes takes place subconsciously in the minds of the characters portrayed in his novels. The opulence of their decadence contradicts and masks any awareness of their own destruction. At this point, one cannot go far enough in stressing that myths seem to operate in human minds without ever being perceived. As Barthes would maintain: "they go without saying." Indeed, this being unaware of the functioning of a myth is the essential ingredient of its very effectiveness. A mythology, then, signifies a false appearance distanced from historical reality. It is "stolen speech," that is an untrue, yet realistic copy of an image (for example, the

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[46]Hardt 27.

French greatness of a Negro giving a salute). The extravagant display of food in Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg is a clever lie for it gives the appearance of well-being. Its opulence is the fabricated impression of everlasting life, social stability and prosperity, whose real meaning of death and downfall is missing and indeed covered up by this lavishness. To extend Roland Barthes' theory of myth to language-systems, specifically in the context of style, or the different forms of speech in literature, the cultural phenomenon of food may be considered as an extratextual language which is parodied or reworked as a subtext within the workings of the broader text of a novel. To clarify this statement it is now necessary to turn from the work of one theorist, Barthes, to that of another, the Russian formalist, Mikhail Bakhtin.

3. Bakhtin, Literary Style and Banquet Scenes

In his essay, "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin deals specifically with the question of literary style. He intends showing how various styles of speech as such are indeed language-systems, or discourses, which could be understood as the ideological property of certain groups in society. By style Bakhtin denotes not just the individual or period bound tones of language, but particularly the inseparable conjoining of verbal forms with social phenomena. In this respect, a text may contain a variety of styles drawn from a broad spectrum of utterances particular to people from various walks of life. These styles may therefore be derived from "the language of a priest, a knight, a merchant, a peasant, a jurist and so on."[47] Bakhtin, however, is particularly interested in that style which he perceives as having come to dominate originally parallel speech forms, an amalgam known as literary language, and the socio-historical implications of its privileged position on the genre of the novel.

Indeed, each social group, from men to women, adults to children and the aristocracy to the industrial working class, and every profession, from artists to scientists, farmers to bankers and soldiers to thieves, acquires its own jargon. This

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[47]M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P , 1981) 259-422: 401.

is a system of language created and controlled by that particular group, often for the purpose of excluding others. Nonetheless, even these jargons operate in the larger framework of a "national language," say for example English, French, Russian, German, etc. It is in this context that Bakhtin reports that, according to various linguists and philologists, language in general is considered as a system conditioned specifically by the socio-historical, that is, ideological development of a society as a whole. Yet seeing how society is a structured phenomenon reflecting a system of power relations, which may vary to differing degrees with the passing of time, it must also be said that national language, at any given historical moment, is shaped by the ideology of that specific group which happens to be in authority. In this respect, everyday language and ideology become interlinked, for in using one the other must necessarily be implied. According to Bakhtin, the particular groups which dominate socio-historical and therefore linguistic development throughout time are "forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world."[48] Essentially, this means that, in order to preserve their position of privilege, the land-owning aristocracy, the church and industrialists, which, historically speaking, have been those very groups in possession of socio-political authority, appear to offer their mutually complementary language and ideology as the only

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[48]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 270.

viable answer to the conversational and literary requirements of the rest of society.

As a consequence, Bakhtin asserts that this unitary literary language becomes a "correct language." It is a posited norm which, in order to secure its own position, opposes and overcomes the given reality of "heteroglossia." This latter term is used by Bakhtin to describe the conditions of the meaning of an utterance. In other words, he maintains that meaning is created by and operates in accordance with the social, historical, meteorological, and physiological conditions of a particular time and place.[49] The category of language commonly known as buzz words provide a particularly explicit illustration of this procedure in which words are seen to be serving the "specific sociopolitical purposes of the day."[50] Correct language overcomes the alien languages of heteroglossia by "ennobling" them, that is, by absorbing other styles and reconceptualising them by adding its own intention or accent. To illuminate this point Bakhtin cites the classical chivalric romance which was shaped by combining Latin with numerous national languages or vernaculars - thus respectively the languages of classical literature, early Christian legend and the Breton-Celtic oral tradition. He maintains that chivalric romance re-oriented the modes of these alien discourses to suit its own socio-economic class

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[49]See "Glossary," The Dialogic Imagination 428.

[50]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 263.

consciousness. This confrontation or reconceptualising of one or a multitude of other discourses or language-systems by another will be discussed in further detail later.

To this extent, Bakhtin thus considers literary language, not as an abstract communication, but as an ideologically loaded system which expresses the "forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization."[51] Just as was seen in chapter two where Barthes' theory of everyday myth is concerned, now Bakhtin suggests that literary language itself, understood as the property of the ruling class, is presented as being marked with the implication of universality. In this sense the language of the socio-economically dominant class is applicable to the whole of society as a norm.

However, due to the dynamic nature of development, which itself is a response to the phenomena of each new time and place, unitary literary language does not stagnate, rather, like myth, it constructs itself within constantly evolving socio-historical conditions. Literary language is then both in part unitary as well as representative of heteroglossia. In this environment of new and potential meaning, literary language is stratified as one of many "dialects." It is in this context, that Bakhtin is able to maintain that an

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[51]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 271.

utterance exists in the contradictory convergence of a centralising unitary language and a decentralising socio-historical heteroglossia. He thus proposes that literary language is dialogic.

Bakhtin then relates this knowledge of the dialogical nature of literary language to the historical allocation of each of the main poetic genres to respective groups within society. He claims that the high poetry of knights and monks satisfied the requirements of officialdom in serving its aims of national, cultural and political centralisation. On the other hand, the novel is identified as a decentralising factor within socio-political development. Here the author wishes to distinguish his/her time and place from another's. Furthermore, he sees the "low" genre of the carnival spectacle as having no linguistic focal point whatsoever because it does not discriminate between styles in considering all language forms as a potential source for ridicule. It is in this way, however, that Bakhtin first disagrees with what he sees as the traditional view of stylistics which deemed novels to be authorial monologues serving a socio-linguistic unity. In contrast, he considers the novel to be dialogic exactly because it participates in a heteroglossia. It bears the characteristics of "multi-languageness," in that the author draws upon not just one specific form but all verbal styles from high prose to rhetoric and everyday speech.[52]

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[52]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 274.

To clarify this point, however, Bakhtin expands upon the traditional understanding of the arbitrary formation of the word. Clearly showing influence from Saussure, he begins his re-assessment in dispelling the view that the form of the word is the result of a confrontation singularly with the very object it is to bring to light. This opinion denies the possibility that the chosen word could be met and hindered by another's word expressing that same object from another angle or time frame. In contrast Bakhtin proposes that "between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme."[53] To illustrate his abstract argument it may be said that object (i) may well be expressed by word (a), but this word is chosen from a potential environment of varying alternatives: words (a), (b), (c), (d), etc. Similarly, one may suggest that a speaker feels obliged to select the word "bloke" as opposed to the words "man," "fellow," "gentleman," "guy," "chap," "lad," "homme," "mec," "gentilhomme," "Mann," or "cheloviek" in accordance with certain circumstances. A number of subtle variations in meaning on a single theme are stratified and made available to meet particular temporal, spacial and social criteria. In this case the word that has been chosen suits an informal and familiar situation conveyed in English in, more than likely, contemporary Southern England. A French-speaking aristocrat

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[53]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 276.

writing a formal letter in eighteenth-century France would require another term. Bakhtin suggests that the word is given stylistic shape specifically by living in the dialogically interactive environment of these alternative alien words which are also already expressing the object in question. A word then may collide with other possibilities and so "become an active participant in social dialogue,"[54] changing to meet a specific social setting. Bakhtin thus considers words to be born out of a process of dialogical continuation.

In the light of the initially arbitrary and yet socially motivated nature of a word, Bakhtin remarks that it becomes necessary to study the context of a word to understand it fully. One must ask why it is chosen above and beyond the potential words of various others. At this point, Bakhtin returns to the main thrust of his essay in making the analogy that, similarly, where literary language is concerned, it is the intentional dimension which is of the utmost interest to the student of stylistics. Bearing in mind the argument he puts forward for the development of the word, Bakhtin now regards the broader concern of literary language as being situated in a "heteroglot," or matrix of particular points of view on the world. Just as one word may be determined by a particular social requirement, so it is that language is overrun by context and intentions. A parallel may be drawn here between the added meaning or intention of the concept in

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[54]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 276.

Barthes' everyday mythologies and Bakhtin's context-ridden literary language. In order to give a unitary appearance literary language steals the other stylistic forms it encounters and distorts them to suit its own ends. As Bakhtin asserts:

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.[55]

In other words, Bakhtin maintains that in coming into contact with literary language, words with other accents lose their "other-languageness," they are "deformed" by literary language and both are no longer that which they used to be. In the novel then, Bakhtin proclaims that an author intentionally "exhibits" words from a multitude of layers of socially stratified language. The author does not rid the other's intention from the various types of socio-ideologically developed language that he quotes in his text. Rather, "the prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master."[56] A novel may thus be described as a matrix of independent, yet

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[55]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 293.

[56]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 299-300.

culturally loaded subtexts brought together to serve one point of view: a decentralising authorial intention.

Literary language is thus a fabricated discourse in that, according to Bakhtin, it is reworking the real heteroglossia of language into the structured system of a novel in order to express and set apart the author's hidden ideology from that of his/her time. This operation is similar to that of the everyday myth which copies and distorts a primary discourse, or independent history, by adding meaning according to the needs of a particular group's own historical intentions. Therefore, in modern literature, language objects such as clothing, jewellery, furniture, vehicles, weapons, etc, or concepts of nature, society, God, art and literature itself can be understood as carriers of mythological and ideological expressions. In other words, they can be seen strategically as a subtext conveying a hidden, intended or unintended, truth. Another one of these language objects is food. That is, the mythologically and ideologically loaded, cultural phenomenon of food and eating in literature can be understood as a functioning sign-system in reference to hidden truths. Just as various utterances or the varying styles of speech of different people are language-systems, so too can the different ingredients, preparation and final presentation of food be considered as a form of language, discourse or sign-system. Once again like the varying styles of speech this discourse may be parodied in literature. In this way, the

discursive patterns of food soon belong to, and are quickly shaped by, a certain part of society: they become ideologised. Its verbal presentation is then reworked in prose where, in the optics of Bakhtin, it acts dialogically. It is both a fabrication whose original social meaning is deformed by the centralising social intentions of literary language and that very original other-languageness which now comes to serve the author's intentions. It is by regarding the metalinguistic form of food from the perspective of its fundamental "real meaning," or other-languageness which is automatically misappropriated in literature, that one may reveal the underlying conditions of that society which an author parodies. It is necessary to continue briefly with the present discussion of Bakhtin's essay to clarify further the process of deconstructing the fabricated or ideologised styles of literary language to reveal fundamental meaning.

Having established that heteroglossia is reworked in the structured system of the novel, Bakhtin goes on to discuss how discourse is "double-voiced." Being essentially "another's speech" serving the author's intentions, it appears that literary language simultaneously serves two speakers and therefore actually two intentions. These are recognised by Bakhtin as "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author."[57] However, Bakhtin goes on to remark that the individuals within

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[57]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 324.

a novel which represent a certain linguistic heteroglossia are also by definition submerged in a social heteroglossia. Consequently, they may be qualified as a social parody. The double-voicedness or "bifurcation" of discourse is therefore not that of an author and the characters, but that of the author and the specific society which he/she parodies.

This system of dialogic bifurcation is anticipated in myth. A sign is dialogical in that the original language-object and the arbitrary intention at the linguistic level are appropriated from this first order by a motivated metalanguage, or (Barthes') "mythmakers." By way of illustration, it may be said that in the modern literary mythology of food and eating, food itself does not play a symbolic role. It is not metaphorical, rather it is metonymic because it can be understood, as mentioned above, as a paraphrase of a hidden truth in its specific sign-language. In other words, it is both a replica of something (for example, the foodstuff of fish) and a "deformation," that is, something which is not quite the same as it was before (still "fish," but no longer swimming or at the end of an angler's line, instead it is fileted, covered in a creamy sauce, and packaged in a box bearing a marine motif and the words "suitable for microwave ovens"). Mythical signs are therefore dialogical as they contain the original content and intention, albeit hidden and distorted.

Bakhtin goes on to maintain that, due to the internal double-voicedness of literary language, the object at the centre of a work of prose "is always entangled in someone else's discourse about it."[58] For instance, in the above example of food in the Twentieth Century, it could be said that its verbal representation is already caught up in the ideology of the capitalist middle class. It is by no means simply a fish dish, but one specifically shaped to attract a certain type of consumer with the intention of making a profit. The object is thus firmly connected to an ideological intention or way of looking at things. To return to literary language, Bakhtin suggests that by writing prose an author is taking hold of a world which is apparently unitary and already qualified by its characters and their ideology-ridden speech and actions. In this sense a novelist cannot be seen as the proprietor of literary language, rather he/she is acting in a world which is written for him/her in the speech of the others he/she quotes. To these various forms of another's speech the writer then adds his/her own new historical decentralising intention. In this way heteroglossia - that is, linguistic meaning derived in accordance with a particular time and place - is attached once more to the internally dialogised ideological intention embedded in the characters, and this in turn, enables the author to reveal both the social and the historical dimension of language. The writer is thus in part

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[58]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 330.

a mythologist. By adding his/her own historical intention to an apparently unitary literary language, the latter's "false" universal nature may be exposed. Consequently, an analysis of the socially loaded food quoted in modern literature will disclose its underlying historical truths and conditions.

It is interesting to point out that the fabricated veil of myth is, indeed, touched upon briefly by Bakhtin later in his essay. He suggests that myth should be looked at less from the psychological level in folklore, and more from the perspective of the history of language consciousness.[59] He maintains that mythical thought, which is formed where ideological meaning is bonded to language, "substitutes itself for the connections and interrelationships of reality itself."[60] The forms of myth thus create a new truth - Barthes used the terms "distorted meaning" and "stolen speech" in this respect - which restricts the free intentions of language and limits expression to comply with certain socially determined guidelines.

Finally, Bakhtin examines the social arrangement of language styles. Evidently approaching the subject from a Marxist angle, he asserts that the consciousness of literary language is socially and ideologically centralised upon the class system. However, he maintains that the dominant consciousness - identified as originally chivalric romance -

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[59]Bakhtin, note 36, "Discourse" 369.

[60]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 369.

was in need of a unitary language to consolidate its own world of myth from a world of alien cultures all historically jostling with one another about it. Here Bakhtin proposes that literary language prompted the process of reconceptualising or "ennobling" language, as briefly mentioned above. Discovering the material for its own correct language in these alien cultures, class-based society then reworks alien language into its own system of ideals in spite of the fact that their beliefs directly oppose those of the popular world from which it has just stolen. Wearing the garb of alien language to promote its own unity, the socio-economically privileged class, or bourgeoisie, is now forced to deal constantly with the very otherness and decentralising quality of that alien discourse.

In order to clarify this process it is necessary to refer back to the earlier discussion of the culturally independent subtext of food and eating in Thomas Mann's novels Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg. Here it was seen how, needing to convince themselves of their own immortality, the individual members of the bourgeoisie "steal" food from low physiological language, where it is recognised as simply sustaining life, and deform it into a unitary language or culinary norm which has the more elevated occupation of superficially banishing death. From this optic, ever preoccupied with acquiring the image of health and success from food, the characters of Mann's two novels may be seen

somewhat ironically, as having constantly to deal with the very physiological otherness of this subtext and thus their own personal and social decline. Unitary language is therefore a lie constructed from nature and history for the purposes of the culturally privileged.

Indeed, Bakhtin reiterates that literary language draws upon various languages. Here, he means specifically forms of spoken or written language, but this, as I have implied, may well be expanded to include the language-systems of myth. All of these sources are employed with one intention in mind which is, according to Bakhtin, "to preserve the socially sealed-off quality of a privileged community ('the language of respectable society')."[61] In addition, he maintains that each and every discourse is specific to a single kind of person. Essentially then, literary language is not interested in the direct meaning of an utterance, rather it is concerned with how this meaning can be put to use in accordance with the speaker's social position. In other words, to borrow from Barthes' terminology, literary language is interested only in the concept: in changing the form of the message from a popular to an elevated discourse.

Bakhtin maintains, however, that there is a counter-trend to the larcenous behaviour of literary language or, as he now labels it, "the lie of pathos" of the ruling groups of society. Opposed to the power-holding "liars," the clergy and

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[61]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 382.

the aristocracy, knights and merchants, scholars and jurists, is the "gay deception" of the "merry rogues" of the Renaissance, or carnival figures, whose whole existence relies on lying to the liars.[62] This mock falsity which, according to Bakhtin, makes the power of the ruling classes seem harmless by parodying it, however, appears to be absent in modern literature. Nonetheless, one of the forms of this gay deception during the Renaissance, namely that of the banquet images of the carnival, does provide this study of the mythology of food in contemporary literature with an indispensable parallel where historical truth is concerned. For this purpose it is now necessary to take a brief look at Bakhtin's discussion of the feast and particularly the banquet imagery of the French writer, Rabelais.

A feast is defined as the occasion when a family or entire community, perhaps with invited guests, sits down together about a table to delight in a generous meal usually of numerous courses to celebrate an event or person. In the introduction to his work, Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin explains that every feast, whether a carnival banquet or an official feast of the church or state, acquires its significance not from any physiological need to eat, but from "an essential, meaningful philosophical content."[63] Indeed,

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[62]Bakhtin, "Discourse" 401.

[63]M. M. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: M I T , 1968) 8.

he maintains that something spiritual and ideological must be added to the physiological dimension for the fact of eating to become the event of human festivity. It appears then that the primary character of a feast is that one is not so much celebrating the food as one's relationship with it.

Bakhtin announces the second characteristic of the feast as the fact that it is "always essentially related to time."[64] Historically, feasts are associated with turning points in either nature or human society. Modern day examples range from birthday celebrations to wedding breakfasts, from a retirement party to the funeral banquet, from the harvest festival to Christmas. It is evident just from these few instances that festivities are called for at times of death, revival, change and renewal.[65]

Bakhtin goes on to say that, in a society arranged according to class and feudal relations, it was only in the carnival that feasting could retain the utopian characteristic conveyed in its fundamental structure. It is essentially a communal occasion where everyone is free and equal to partake in a natural abundance. He contends that, in contrast, the official feasts of the power holding church, feudal overlords and state distorted the ideal of freedom. They at once formalised the autonomous relation of the feast with time, relegating all crisis to the past and thus asserting the

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[64]Bakhtin, Rabelais 9.

[65]Bakhtin, Rabelais 9.

perceived stability of the present. Feasts became an affirmation of the need to preserve the current status quo and, by association, they avowed the eternalisation of the privileged class. In this way the true nature of the freedom and equality of the feast became distorted and a new mythical truth was created to take its place.

Nonetheless, the carnival survived and retained many of its defining qualities. Indeed, as if to combat its misappropriation by the authorities, the carnival found it necessary to accentuate its characteristics of natural equality and abundance in exaggeration and excess. This remains true even today as can be seen in the larger-than-life carnival effigies at the Mardi Gras in Nice or the flamboyant dancing and camp costumes of Rio de Janeiro, in the Harlequin's masks of Venice and the free chocolate and beer frenzy of Cologne. The carnival represents an alternative, no-holds-barred existence or liberation from the dominant reality of everyday life imposed upon all and sundry by the establishment.[66] It does not bare the same traits as the official feast. As Bakhtin points out, there is no social rank defining behaviour or address, nor are there any places reserved for the privileged and there are certainly no prohibitions. The carnival creates a whole new utopian atmosphere which contrasts that of the normal world and so, as

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[66]Notwithstanding the dubious role of the modern day "carnival committees."

Bakhtin insists, it also develops new forms of speech to cope with the temporary suspension of hierarchy. This new form of communication would necessarily be free of the already qualified norms of respectable society and, in a sense, would have to reflect the achievement of the carnival existence of turning the established order on its head and inside out. To describe this language Bakhtin alludes to such terms as "dynamic" and "playful," a "turnabout" and a "reviving parody."[67] Consequently, one would expect the communication system of the carnival to concentrate on the here and now, on what is natural and what is free, and if need be to an exaggerated extent. Carnival, the counter-trend to bourgeois mythologising, thus liberates primary truth by means of a grotesque realism. I shall return to this point later.

In chapter four of his work centred upon Rabelais, Bakhtin discusses the specific topic of banquet imagery, which is one of the principal aspects of carnivalism. To reveal the meaning of banquet scenes Bakhtin returns to the basic assertion that eating signifies the body's primary encounter with the world. In the very act of consuming the earth's produce the body literally internalises the world and "grows at the world's expense."[68] This meeting between humanity and the world can be imagined in the terms of a conflict, for as Bakhtin maintains, "[man] triumphs over the world, devours it

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[67]Bakhtin, Rabelais 11.

[68]Bakhtin, Rabelais 281.

without being devoured himself."[69] The limits between man and the world, he alleges, are removed to the benefit of man. Bakhtin then points out that food is the reward for another ancient human struggle with the world, namely, work. The successful investment of human labour in the hunt or agricultural endeavours would be celebrated in consuming the physical returns of that effort, that is, one would feast on the very animal caught and the crops reaped or fruit gathered. Bakhtin stresses the social aspect of eating and working in stating that both are activities carried out by the community as a whole. It is thus the triumph of the life of the whole of society in its potentially deadly encounter with the world which is, according to Bakhtin, inherited by the banquet. A banquet is therefore always a momentous occasion of universal significance.

When Bakhtin returns to the relation between feasts and forms of discourse in the context of Rabelais' mocking style, he proclaims that "truth can be said only in the atmosphere of the banquet, only in table talk."[70] The carnivalesque banquet scene provided the perfect setting for Rabelais to reveal the "gay truth," to expose fearlessly the falsehood of the ruling class in boundless laughter and coarse exaggeration because food and festivities have the effect of returning everyone to the primary bodily confrontation with the world. Consequently,

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[69]Bakhtin, Rabelais 281.

[70]Bakhtin, Rabelais 285.

they establish an egalitarian environment which enables all to join together in a travesty of the figures of authority without fear of retribution. The carnival liberates the discourse of the people and reverberates the message that the victory over the world, tasted in the food at the table, is of universal significance. As Bakhtin maintains, "in this image there was no trace of mysticism, no abstract-idealistic sublimation,"[71] and, one may add very well, none of the characteristics imperative to the bourgeois meal. So it is that there developed a polarity of language styles in the realm of the feast. The correct literary talk of the official feast of the bourgeoisie was counter-balanced by a conscious mixing of the exalted culture of that higher order with the bodily profanity of the lower natural order at the carnival banquet.

In combining the higher and lower social orders, the images of the carnival banquet by definition create an occasion of ambivalence. It does in fact cite the cultural ways of the higher order with the general intention of satirising them from the perspective of the profane. However, the vulgarity and negative connotations of the banquet images supplied by the popular order both momentarily destroy all that which is fabricated socially and, as Bakhtin points out, in that very satire, also preserve their essence, "their

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[71]Bakhtin, Rabelais 285.

positive nature."[72] It is in this way then, in following the example set by the carnival banquet, that Bakhtin suggests that an author may "create a free atmosphere"[73] in which to mock the corruption of natural equality, or historical truth, by the sacred stratification of society. In this respect it may be added that the language forms originally stolen by the privileged class and misappropriated from the natural heteroglossia to suit their own politically centralising requirements, are "liberated from such fear and piousness"[74] in the banquet atmosphere and re-appropriated to serve popular truth.

Bakhtin's discussion of literary language and the language-system of the carnival banquet has provided this study with a parallel which could not have been disregarded. However, it must be emphasised that this work is dealing with the other side of the culinary coin. The Russian formalist was concerned with showing how Rabelais, in particular, adopted the banquet images of the popular festival in order to liberate what he saw as universal truths from the ideology of the ruling class. By way of a subtle contrast, this investigation intends to reveal how hidden conditions may be unearthed if one delves under the mythical layers of food in twentieth-century literature. In other words, I intend showing

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[72]Bakhtin, Rabelais 290.

[73]Bakhtin, Rabelais 291.

[74]Bakhtin, Rabelais 297.

that the assumed universality of the official feast inherited by the bourgeois meal may be deciphered as a subtext or stylistic device, which, when reappropriated to its original socio-political other-languageness, may disclose the historical truth of literary characters and, therefore, expose the distortion of reality by certain groups within contemporary society. Furthermore, bearing in mind Bakhtin's post-structural dialogue between the official feast and carnivalism, as well as Barthes' theory of everyday mythologies, I shall maintain that, depending on the position of the particular character within a given social structure, eating signifies either the illusion of authoritative control over one's destiny, or the speechless acceptance of the very fate to which one is assigned as a natural and unavoidable fact.

4. Friedrich Dürrenmatt's Der Richter und sein Henker: Gluttony, Victory and Justice

The popular detective novel Der Richter und sein Henker[75] by the Swiss writer, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, contains many references to food and several instances of eating. Though food is far from being the primary theme of the work, it does act as a cultural subtext which complements, and so moulds, other aspects of the novel. From Barthes one learns how the phenomenon of food may be regarded as a language-system upon which a mythical system is built. The myth conceals an ideological intention which robs food of its independent history and turns it into an accomplice serving the myth's own ends. By analysing the image of food described by Dürrenmatt in his novel, from the perspective of its original historical meaning, it will be possible to disclose the very ideological distortion which is being taken for granted by the reader. In other words, just as Stefan Hardt

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[75]Published in 1952, Der Richter und sein Henker recounts the attempt by the old and fatally ill Bärlach to win a wager made in Istanbul in his youth with the criminal Gastmann. Bärlach maintained that due to the fact of human imperfection no crime could ever go undetected. Gastmann contradicted by insisting that the perfect crime was possible entirely for the very same reason. He was to prove his point by pushing a man off a bridge to his death. Bärlach's protests were rejected by the Turkish police who viewed the case as suicide. Years later, the murder of a Bernese police officer, Schmied, by his jealous colleague, Tschanz, provides Bärlach with an opportunity to catch his adversary. The murderer averts suspicion onto Gastmann who, too late to realise the trap set by the inspector, is shot dead by the young officer in an act of apparent self-defence. Bärlach finds Tschanz guilty of Schmied's murder during the ensuing meal scene.

proved that in Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks and Der Zauberberg the decadent display of food was an accomplice to the mythology of immortality which covers up the death and downfall of the bourgeoisie, so it is that I shall show how the eating of large amounts of food in Dürrenmatt's Der Richter und sein Henker, strange though it might seem, pertains to the mythology of justice. I will maintain that gluttony and its inherent concept of victory and success are appropriated to serve the notion of justice which, in order to assert itself, relates the depiction - in an almost Hegelian sense - of quantity with the idea of quality. In this respect, it shall be seen how the fact of eating a lot is equated with the truth and, thus, the lie of the victory of justice is instigated. In addition, and in keeping with Bakhtin's discourse theory, seeing that food may be regarded as a social discourse or style of language already ideologised by society and thus dialogically misappropriated by correct (literary) language, it goes without saying that the appearance of food in the novel is essentially double-voiced. By being quoted in prose, food is reconceptualised by the author from the society to which it is forced to belong and re-arranged to serve his/her intention. A reappropriation of food to its original other-languageness or socio-ideological conditions will set it free from its social "deformation," as Bakhtin would call it, and so necessarily reveal the fundamental historical truth of the society parodied by the author.

The meal scene presided over by Bärlach and Tschanz in the penultimate chapter is marked particularly by the detective's excessive appetite. Indeed, not only does he take something from each of the numerous dishes prepared by the two women described as hearty-looking, but he eats virtually everything. He eats sardines, crayfish, salads comprised of gherkins, tomatoes and peas covered in mayonnaise and eggs, as well as coldcuts, chicken and salmon, all of which he consumes with bread. He then orders the same again with a third glass of wine. However, this is merely the first course. Next to come are three pies filled with goose liver, pork and truffles which he washes down with two glasses of red Neuenburger wine. This is then followed by veal cutlets, rice, French fries and lettuce which is accompanied by champagne. Finally, he has the cheese plate brought to him, the contents of which he consumes with radishes, pickled gherkins and pearl onions.

Clearly the most outstanding feature of the text, the pure matter or image of "the gluttonous eater" may be identified as the language object quoted from a primary linguistic order. Thus, according to Roland Barthes' semiology, eating an excessive amount of food may be regarded as a linguistic signifier. To reiterate examples quoted in chapter two, "the gluttonous eater" or "a large amount of food" may be compared to the linguistic signifiers "the steak" and "a Negro giving a salute." The language object or signifier is then endowed with meaning by corresponding to an

arbitrarily motivated usage or concept: that which is signified. Indeed, the availability and consumption of an abundant harvest of food denotes success in humanity's primary encounter with the world. It is a testament not just to having survived, but to having won an overwhelming victory. Thus the social usage or signified of food as "a victory" celebration of human struggle is added to the fact of "eating a lot," just as the signified of "blood, strength and masculinity" is added to the signifier "the steak" or "French imperiality" to "a Negro giving a salute." The signifier of "a large amount of food" and the signified of "a victory" come together to imply the linguistic meaning or sign of "a victorious amount of food." This may then be taken as an indisputably natural phenomenon by the reader in much the same way as one may readily accept the signs of "the masculinity of steak" or "the Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute."

However, not only does the vast amount of food which Bärlach eats seem astonishing, but the manner in which he consumes such quantities may also leave one feeling somewhat enervated. He eats "pausenlos" and "gierig" and has "einen unendlichen Hunger."[76] Similarly, later he continues "unaufhörlich, unersättlich" and "unbarmherzig."[77] Quite simply, the reader is faced with what can only be described as

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[76]Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker (1952; Cambridge: Riverside; Boston: Houghton, 1964) 109.

[77]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 110.

a "grauenhaftes Mahl."[78] Furthermore, Bärlach's image appears to undergo a series of radical transformations throughout the course of the meal. He begins as "ein unerschütterliches Bild der Ruhe."[79] However, a metamorphosis is then activated whereby the inspector changes into frightening and ever more imposing forms. Thus he is referred to, firstly, as a "Dämon,"[80] then as a "triumphierender Negerhäuptling,"[81] and a "teuflischer Esser,"[82] and finally becomes "das Bild einer übermenschlichen Überlegenheit, ein Tiger, der mit seinem Opfer spielt."[83] It is this very combination of the urgency of Bärlach's appetite and the poetic images used to describe his appearance which must first make one suspect the presence of a mythological dimension to the portrayal of a large amount of food. Likewise, one cannot ignore the fact that each meal the inspector has ironically spells the approach of his own death. The reader is informed on numerous occasions throughout the novel that Bärlach is suffering from a severe stomach condition which can only be aggravated by eating certain foods, let alone the grotesque quantities described. In this respect, one must surely view the images

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[78]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 112.

[79]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 108.

[80]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 109.

[81]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 109-110.

[82]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 110.

[83]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 111.

coveted by the description of Bärlach during the final meal scene as an extraordinary fabrication. The meal is a façade.

Bärlach's particular gluttony, then, may be identified as the object of a "second order semiological system" or metalanguage. According to Barthes' theory of everyday myths, this textual appropriation of a pre-existent understanding of eating excessively may be regarded as the mythical signifier or form, such as the above mentioned examples of "the masculinity of steak" or "the Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute." The mythical signifier or form resembles the linguistic sign - "a victorious amount of food" - except that in the transition from the linguistic to the mythical level the linguistic sign is emptied of its independent history or autonomous meaning.

In other words, the image of excessive eating quoted in the literary text and assigned to Bärlach no longer represents a victory whose knowledge is supplied by humanity's primary encounter with the world in the hunt and the harvest. Rather, this form of "a victorious amount of food" is stolen by the author and emptied of its primary discourse to serve as an accomplice to a particular ideology or myth. In Der Richter und sein Henker "a victorious amount of food" is compelled to serve the very intentions of the mythical signified or concept of "a victory" which belongs particularly to the character of Bärlach. A similar mechanism was seen at work with Barthes' examples discussed earlier. He maintains that the mythical

form of "the masculinity of steak" is stolen by the homesick French traveller, emptied of its original history of strength and masculinity arbitrarily implied by the bull's blood, and forced to comply with the intentions of the mythical signified or concept of a particularly "French strength and masculinity." The French traveller, (falsely) equating masculinity with being French, is thus comforted while abroad and faced with unappetising foreign food by the signification or nostalgic myth of "the Frenchness of steak." Likewise, the form of "the Frenchness of a Negro giving a salute" on the front of a patriotic glossy magazine is robbed of its primary discourse - that Senegal is a colony of France, etc. - and applied to the intentions of the mythical concept of "French imperiality." The magazine, (falsely) relating imperiality with greatness, thus convinces the reader of the myth of "French greatness." A process of misinformation, or distorting the truth, is thus in operation.

Indeed, the inspector's excesses are in no way arbitrary, rather the portrayal of the consumption of "a victorious amount of food" is motivated by a distorted concept or lie: still the signified of "a victory," but now that supplied with the historical intention of Bärlach's desire for justice. On the primary linguistic level, Bärlach's gluttonous appetite signifies victory. However, on the textual or mythical level this victory must be seen in the context of solving a crime. Bärlach wishes to put an end both to the mystery surrounding

Schmied's murder and, in particular, the criminal legacy of his fateful wager with Gastmann. Dürrenmatt connects the mythical form of "a victorious amount of food" with the concept of "a just victory." Motivated by the theme of social justice, he falsely equates the image of victory with the revelation of the truth and justice, and thus convinces the reader of the myth of "the justice of eating a large amount of food." Indeed, the amount of food the inspector consumes appears to be so excessive and his appetite so insatiable that it impresses upon the reader the sense that only he has a reason to eat, that only he can possibly be victorious. In this way Bärlach may be seen to embody the very idea that "whoever eats shall win" and proliferate the lie that "whoever wins shall be just." So it is that the very monstrous form of Bärlach's relentless eating is a grotesque spectacle which conveys the message of his outright victory and the indefatigable success of his kind of justice. Thus, it is only from the perspective of structuralist theory that one may witness Dürrenmatt's literary sleight-of-hand in manipulating the primary message or sign of "a victorious amount of food" to become the mythically distorted signification of "the justice of a large amount of food."

The images of food and drink in Dürrenmatt's work are often used to signify success and moral righteousness. In her article which briefly explores the connection between meal scenes and the revelation of the truth, Usmiani describes even

how the Swiss author, himself, was "an obese long-term diabetic"[84] who may well have been obsessed with food. However, this in no way means the author suffered from a low self-esteem. Indeed, to summarise, Dürrenmatt's work is strewn with many notable meal scenes such as Bockelson's gluttony in Es steht geschrieben, Alfred Traps' trial by dinner party in Die Panne, the civic banquet of Der Besuch der alten Dame, the hangman's supper in Die Physiker, the emperor's breakfast in Romulus der Große, and the president's midnight feast in Grieche sucht Griechin. She points out how the meal appears to be a stylistic technique which serves as a "background for the unmasking of the guilty man's crime" and, consequently, the revelation of truth.[85] In this respect Der Richter und sein Henker is no exception. However, it must also be maintained that food is cited not merely to act as a passive and picturesque backdrop to the themes of guilt and justice. Rather, it may be seen as a mechanism purposefully introduced by the author to show the apparent atonement of that guilt and the enforcement of the victory of justice.

It is perhaps hardly surprising then that many of Dürrenmatt's "good guys" or protagonists are, like the author himself, fat men. Bärlach and the clearly autobiographical Writer from Der Richter und sein Henker are both overweight

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[84]Renate Usmiani, "Justice and the Monstruous Meal in the Work of Friedrich Dürrenmatt," [Canadian] Humanities Association Bulletin 20.2 (1969) 8-14: 9.

[85]Usmiani 13-14.

and fascinated with the subject of gastronomy. During a visit by Bärlach and Tschanz in chapter thirteen, the Writer talks of Gastmann's skill as a gourmet chef and spends fifteen minutes describing dish after dish. With his interest roused, the inspector then joins in a discussion on international cuisine which lasts a further three quarters of an hour until he is exhausted. The two are like sparring partners. Indeed, in the light of the mythological value of food in this particular literary text, that it denotes a victory appropriated to justice, their discussion could be regarded as an ideologised discourse by which the two may establish their respective standpoints where the matter of justice is concerned. The Writer is drawn to Gastmann, finding him "ein interessanter Mensch," whereas Bärlach retaliates "seinerseits von der Kochkunst der Türken ...."[86] The discussion completely exceeds Tschanz's level of comprehension. His inadequacy forces him to make the tasteless blunder of asking the Writer directly whether he believes Gastmann is responsible for Schmied's death. In order to accommodate Tschanz, the tone of the conversation then changes, and the subject of food gives way to the bare truth about Gastmann in a more explicit assessment of his character and capricious code of conduct. The Writer finally admits that Gastmann is "a bad sort" and that, in addition to the villain's abilities as a cook, he is intrigued by the possibility of someone actually

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[86]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 76.

being a nihilist; of behaving in a good or evil way according only to the whim of the moment.

As may be realised by a structuralist approach to the matter, the literary display of food may well be regarded as a language stolen and restored specifically to convey a distorted meaning in the name of a certain ideology. A deconstruction of the constituents of the final meal scene of Dürrenmatt's novel will reveal the underlying conditions of the mythical appropriation of the language-system of food by the author. I repeat that food is stolen to convey the "natural" victory of a kind of social justice and suggest that this occurs at the very moment justice would otherwise be seen to have failed.

To return to the final meal, Bärlach's gastronomic celebration of his own victory poses the reader with a confusing dilemma. Momentarily putting a tabular understanding of the text aside, it must be said that this image of success is somewhat incongruous with the apparent lineal development of the plot of the detective novel thus far. Surely it is Tschanz who ought to be celebrating for he has been the more successful of the two. The young police officer seems to have solved Schmied's murder by securing the blame on Gastmann and then shooting him dead in self-defence. The reader may well be left wondering why Bärlach should feel so successful if Tschanz has solved the crime.

In addition, there also seems to be a discrepancy between Tschanz's meagre appetite and the state of the plot. In contrast to Bärlach's never-ending consumption of triumphantly large quantities of food, the amount Tschanz eats can only be described as a sign of defeat. Far from celebrating his success in bringing the case of Schmied's murder to a close with a lot of food, he serves himself only a small portion of potato salad. The yellowish colour of this cold food is a signal that he is a coward. Furthermore, in abstaining from the meat dishes Tschanz can only be perceived as exceptionally weak. It appears he is on the verge of defeat. Evidently, to find the appropriate answer to this discrepancy and the reason for Bärlach's celebration one has to delve further into the structure of the food.

From the perspective of the preparation, selection and consumption of the food, it is intimated from the very onset of the meal scene that Tschanz has been invited by the inspector to assist in a carnival performance of sorts. When he arrives at Bärlach's home, Tschanz is immediately "baffled" by the cacophonic overture of the preparations for a meal: he hears "aus der Küche das Kochen und Brodeln von Wasser und Speisen, das Klirren von Geschirr."[87] The table is set ceremoniously for two people and Tschanz is stupefied by the scene, having had no idea his invitation was for dinner. Meanwhile, Bärlach claps his hands and summons the food. The

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[87]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 108.

culinary spectacle which ensues is designed by Dürrenmatt specifically to mislead, for, as seen above, both the food on display and the very fact of eating are soon exaggerated beyond all sense of propriety.

It is in just such an atmosphere of excess and confusion that the meal performs a turnabout from the celebration of Tschanz's victory, which Bärlach initially remarks as being the cause for the special occasion, to the young officer's demise in the revelation of his guilt. With each new round of the seemingly relentless meal, with each new dish presumably brought out at first to honour and then to mock Tschanz, and which Bärlach then devours, not only does the inspector appear to increase in size to become ever more gruesome, but he gradually discloses the truth about Tschanz. The victorious quantity is thus mechanically equated with the quality of truth. By conceiving this lie - of equating victory with justice - Dürrenmatt is able to obscure the fact that social justice has almost lost to nihilism, as represented by the example of Gastmann's crime, and that it only prevails through Bärlach's trickery, by pitting evil against evil and, therefore, not by an entirely honest means.

The transition from apparent innocence to the revelation of the truth of Tschanz's guilt is reflected in the make-up of the food from the first course onwards. The baroque amount of layer upon layer of food, spilling over the edges of a single plate, is initially comprised of small, inoffensive objects.

They are the soft pinks of seafood, the glowing yellows of egg yoke, the neutral greens of pickles and peas, and the intense reds of tomatoes. They are also the primary forms of life. They are, at first, a colourful lacto-vegetarian starter containing only innocence and none of the guilt connected with animal meat, as will be discussed later. However, they are also limb-like and soon the progression is indeed made to animal products. From the first offerings of vegetables, eggs and insect-like seafood, the meal rapidly moves on to coldcuts, chicken and salmon. Though individually harmless and innocent, in combination these foodstuffs represent the garish luxury of the special occasion. An analysis of the food choice will reveal the truth of Tschanz's guilt and thus a connection can be made between a large amount of food and the victory of justice. Furthermore, Bärlach eats impatiently and in a bestial manner, swallowing each item individually as if they were limbs on a carcass. The time it takes him to eat incongruously almost equals the time taken to describe the menu in the text. This indicates an extreme craving for food and, in turn, an urgent desire to see the victory of justice. This is emphasised further by the textual omission of Bärlach drinking the first two glasses of wine.

In her history of the ordinary meal, Visser explains the "food scale:"

> People today often categorize what they eat on a scale which ranges from the impossibly "strong" (each other, or named pets like dogs or horses, or carnivores because they themselves eat meat) to the

> "weakest" and most generally acceptible (fruit, cereals, leaf and root vegetables.) The strictest vegetarians will eat only the "weakest," least "aggressive" foods. They differentiate themselves by name (calling themselves vegans) from vegetarians who, although they refuse to eat meat, will permit themselves to consume animal products: eggs, milk, and cheese. [...] Meats themselves are placed on a ladder of power ranging from fish (the lowest rung and the most "female" of meats), through poultry, to the "strongest," red meat.[88]

She thus maintains that society perceives the different types of food available for consumption as being ranged on a scale from weak to strong and "impossibly strong." The amount of strength instilled in an item of food is in direct proportion to the amount of aggression needed during and guilt felt after the procurement of that very source of food. From this point of view, it may be said that Bärlach is shown to be working his way through the entire food system and evolution of the species to finally simulate eating the "impossibly strong." In this way, by devouring the guiltiest of foods, the inspector is seen to establish his overwhelming victory over Tschanz.

Indeed, the urgency and greed of Bärlach's grotesque indulgence resembles the victory celebration, not of an official feast, but that of a cannibal banquet. Earlier when he arrived on the scene of Gastmann's annihilation by Tschanz, Lutz, the chief of police and Bärlach's immediate superior, gestures towards the dead bodies and declares: "Die Toten sind

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[88]Margaret Visser, Much Depends on Dinner. The Extraordinary History and Mythology, Allure and Obsessions, Perils and Taboos, of an Ordinary Meal, (1986; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) 151.

serviert."[89] This may well mean: "here are the bodies." However, taken literally one reads: "the dead are served up," as if Bärlach were being invited to feast symbolically upon the corpses. It is tempting then for the reader to interpret the ensuing final meal scene as a cannibalistic celebration of Bärlach's triumph, not only over Tschanz, but also over his life-long enemy, the impulsive villain, Gastmann. I shall discuss the question of regarding the meal as an expression of Gastmann's defeat later.

To return to the analysis of the revelation of guilt in the final meal, it must be pointed out that as Bärlach begins the second course the initial reason for the meal already appears to be modified. Instead of commemorating Tschanz's victory, the inspector announces that he is celebrating knowing the identity of Schmied's murderer. This progression may be traced in the food. It is becoming richer in both substance and expense. It is thus also getting stronger and "guiltier." The goose liver, pork and truffles surrounded by pastry denote the fatty tissue, blood and internal organs of the prey. Bärlach thus begins his turnabout of fortunes by quickly devouring the most easily perishable parts of the body.[90]

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[89]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 105.

[90]Reay Tannahill points out that "until very recently hunters in some parts of the world were accustomed, after they had killed their prey, to have a snack on its more perishable parts (the heart, liver, brains, and the fat behind the eyeballs) before they got down to the task of carving up the

In gulping down the fare of international gastronomy, it may be said that Bärlach is allocated the quality of an all-encompassing world authority. His success appears ever more infallible. He may be regarded as feeding upon and thus internalising the guilt of the food as if his intention were to purge the world of evil. Tschanz is horrified at Bärlach's excessive appetite and is only able to tremble nervously. He is flabbergasted by Bärlach's victorious lie of the justice of a large amount of food and simultaneously sees the reflection of his own lie of the apparent innocence of modesty. Bärlach's success is almost complete: he drinks champagne while Tschanz is left literally gasping for his life in the realisation that he had been trapped.

Bärlach continues to solidify the lie of the victory of justice and meticulously removes even the most chaste of foodstuffs, lettuce, for not a single shred of evil must remain. In this fashion, he convinces Tschanz both that his stomach complaint was a sham all along and that justice will prevail. Bärlach's physiological undertaking is both psychological and military where its effect on Tschanz is concerned. The literary appropriation of the sign of a large amount of food, however, has an ethico-ideological function where the reader is concerned. In spite of constantly stuffing his mouth full of delicious food, Bärlach also happens to be

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carcase into pieces that could be easily transported back to the cave." Flesh and Blood. A History of the Cannibal Complex (1975; London: Sphere, 1976) 4.

in command of the situation linguistically. This fact places one in no doubt as to Dürrenmatt's intention to express the (hidden) ideology of social justice for which his protagonist stands.

Meanwhile, overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the inspector's fabricated victory and apparent health, the corrupt Tschanz is reduced to face his own defeat in a state of practical speechlessness: "Tschanz wagte nicht, den grauenvollen Alten ein zweites Mal zu fragen."[91] He is beyond redemption and groans almost inaudibly as Bärlach finishes the third course with the announcement that the young officer is responsible for Schmied's murder. Again the inspector drinks champagne to mark his decisive victory.

However, Bärlach does not stop eating yet. He piles his plate up with second helpings "als ob ihn nichts mehr interessiere als dieses Essen."[92] Indeed, as conveyed by finishing the champagne, his mission to defeat Tschanz is fully accomplished. The "Last Supper" is brought to a close by Bärlach devouring the almost sinful symbols of social success and prosperity: crystal and diamonds (sparkling champagne), gold (yellow cheese), rubies (red radishes), emeralds (green pickles) and pearls (white onions), all of which, like food, are natural substances transformed by mankind into covetous treasures. The jewel-like food which seems to represent

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[91]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 110.

[92]Dürrenmatt, Der Richter und sein Henker 110.

Bärlach's crowning glory thus already intimates Tschanz's motives for murdering Schmied. Bärlach finally lists the guilty evidence which stands against the young officer. He was driven by material greed and was jealous of Schmied's talent, success, education and girlfriend.

Nonetheless, in light of the culinary myth of justice I would suggest that there is a greater significance to the culmination of this particular meal. Bärlach's relentless excesses clearly go beyond the lengths necessary simply to convince Tschanz of his guilt and the inspector's own victory. The mythological image of Bärlach's appetite for fearless mockery enables Dürrenmatt to reveal the fundamental socio-historical truth of the society he parodies. As hinted at above, Bärlach's victory is not just over Tschanz, but by tricking this young opportunist into killing Gastmann he has succeeded in combatting the underlying social condition of amorality, perhaps even nihilism. As one course of victorious food is consumed after another, the reader is coaxed into accepting the bloody outcome of Bärlach's life-long struggle with Gastmann as the "natural" victory of social justice.

Only once all the food has been consumed does Bärlach finally confess to having used Tschanz to capture and eradicate Gastmann. Unable to trap his arch enemy successfully by any other more honest means, that is, by scrupulous investigative methods, Bärlach has taken the opportunity to pit the corrupt Tschanz against the capriciously evil

Gastmann. One may say that the inspector, himself, has thus gone beyond the strict confines of an either good or bad ethical code. His victory meal is not an official feast but a mock trial. It is designed specifically to absorb guilt and evict evil as well as to liberate the moral truth. The presentation of a banquet and its mythical distortion of the victory of food to that of truth and justice may be seen then as an attempt on Dürrenmatt's behalf to hide or amend the actual failure of social justice in his literary parody of reality. In this respect, one may say that Dürrenmatt wishes to expose the broader question of the amorality of modern society.

Taking into account Dürrenmatt's own alimentary disorder and the frequent portrayal of food in his works, it may be maintained that by quoting the social discourse of gluttony the author is attempting to reconstruct an already ideologically motivated sign-system. The message of the victorious amount of food is reappropriated to serve his own historical intention of justice and to expose the amorality of society. Bärlach's meal is a play on the German idiom of the "Henkersmahlzeit," which is the last meal eaten by someone condemned to death. It is therefore less the executioner's meal as that eaten by the "executionee." In the case of Dürrenmatt's novel, a grotesque turnabout has occurred since it is Bärlach, the "Judge" in the title of the work, who eats triumphantly while Tschanz, his "Hangman," is defeated and

doomed to die. Bearing in mind the very monstrous and distorted nature of Bärlach's humiliating and grotesquely literal "Henkersmahlzeit," it is possible to draw a comparison between its effect, within the framework of the novel's broader issues of good and evil, and the mechanism of Rabelais' carnival banquet scenes, as described by Bakhtin and explained earlier in chapter three. The ordinary meal has been exaggerated and warped to an extraordinary dimension of eccentricity and horror. However, one may suggest that the author Dürrenmatt sees this unconventional and immoderate behaviour utterly necessary, not for the sake of private gluttony, but, like the popular-festive banquet, as Bakhtin would maintain, for the triumph of the people as a whole,[93] for reasons of basic social justice.

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[93]See Bakhtin, Rabelais 301-302.

5. Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd: Good Food, Health and Immortality

On reading Martin Walser's novel, Ein fliehendes Pferd,[94] one cannot help but notice the casual recurrence of the images of eating, drinking and smoking. Already the opening scene, and the chance encounter between Helmut Halm and Klaus Buch, takes place in a lakeside café. This modern setting where one may rest for a while, replenish oneself by eating and drinking, and observe other people as they go by, immediately signals the specific literary function of eating in the novel. There are, among other references to food and drink, also two subsequent meal scenes and a final serving of coffee and cake. The frequent occurrence of the phenomenon of food in this novel concerned with the character of two

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[94]Published in 1978, Ein fliehendes Pferd. Novelle introduces Helmut Halm, a secondary school vice-principal, and his wife, Helene, while on holiday by the shores of Lake Constance. Helmut reflects upon his capacity as a teacher and his feelings of inferiority, from which he longs to flee. Quite unexpectedly, the couple meets a long forgotten former school mate of Helmut, Klaus Buch, now a journalist, and his wife Sabine. The two couples then arrange to meet again for a meal, an excursion on the lake and a hike, during which Klaus triumphantly tames a runaway horse. This event only increases Helmut's resentment towards the dynamic Klaus. The two men take a second trip on the lake, during which Klaus attempts to convince Helmut to embark upon a new life in the Bahamas. Helmut grows silent at this proposal and the fact of an impending storm. Fearing for his life he seizes the tiller causing Klaus to fall overboard. The next day Helene reveals her missing husband's own inferiority complex and lack of success which he had hoped to rectify by drawing upon Helmut's intellectual capacity. Klaus suddenly returns and takes his wife without looking at Helmut. The Halms leave for Montpellier.

particular men seems to accentuate the fact that - as Feuerbach maintained in his famous maxim: "Der Mensch ist, was er ißt" - eating is directly related to an individual's lifestyle and personality. It is the intention of this chapter, then, to analyse the medium of food in Walser's novel and its association to the relationship between the two principal characters, Helmut and Klaus.

In accordance with Roland Barthes' semiology, food may be regarded as a pre-existent language-system which may appear as a cultural subtext within the framework of a novel.[95] During the transition from a naturally occurring extra-textual phenomenon to its apparently "natural" literary appropriation, as explained before, food is first robbed of its independent linguistic history which gave it meaning and then assigned a new mythological message more in keeping with the author's intention. This new message or mythical signification is then taken for granted by the reader just as easily as the original linguistic meaning. Such a process, however, conceals the (author's) ideological intention which has turned the image of food into its accomplice. An analysis of food from the perspective of its original historical meaning, that is, from

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[95]The universal preconceptions of the types of food portrayed by Walser in his novel may contribute to the reader's expectations regarding the nature of particular characters in much the same way as allusions to other works of literature carry certain connotations in accordance with their contemporary reception and, therefore, qualify the reader's understanding of the text. For an investigation of specifically literary references see Roger Hillman, "Ein fliehendes Pferd - A Reconstruction," AUMLA 65 (1986): 48-55.

that part which has been "stolen," will disclose the ideological distortion which the reader considers "natural" or "obvious." It is in this light that I intend showing how food in Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd belongs to the mythology of immortality. Indeed, I propose that by eating "the right food" one will be seen to live forever. Good food, or even "thin food," and its intrinsic concept of both physical and mental health are appropriated to serve the notion of immortality, which in order to assert itself, relates a psychological appreciation of food with the physiological facts of life. In this respect, the fact of eating what is interpreted as "the right food" is equated with longevity, and thus, the lie of "immortality when eating good food" is established.

The two couples dine together on two occasions and already on the first evening food appears to become a contentious issue. Indeed, the Halms and the Buchs are set apart from one another by their choice of food. The Buchs eat only steak and salad, insistently consuming the salad before the steak, and drink only mineral water. Lettuce is cool in temperature, green and eaten raw and therefore earthbound, nurturing and non-aggressively female.[96] It appears to be utterly commendable, as Visser remarks:

> It provides an easy and pleasant way to alleviate any guilt arising from the realization that meat and carbohydrates have yet again dominated the meal. [...] The leaf is non-fattening and usually

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[96]Visser often refers to the femininity of lettuce, Much Depends on Dinner 19, 195, 198 and 222.

> eaten raw, and eating it is therefore virtuous for the body conscious.[97]

In chapter two, it was pointed out that Barthes perceived steak as the purest of meats and that "whoever partakes of it assimilates a bull-like strength."[98] Steak acquires its particular mythological signification from its macho attribute of full-bloodedness. Barthes explains the gory details:

> Full-bloodedness is the raison d'être of steak [...]; rare steak is said to be saignant (when it recalls the arterial flow from the cut in the animal's throat), or bleu (and it is the heavy, plethoric, blood of the veins which is suggested by the purplish colour - the superlative of redness).[99]

Finally Klaus and Helene wash down their youth and prowess - acquired by means of the salad and steak - with the sparkling lucidity of mineral water. Water is the very essence of life. The first land creatures crawled out from the sea. If one is lost and stranded, finding a source of fresh water is essential for survival. Today, tapped from glacial streams, packaged in translucent bottles and sold at exorbitant prices in fashionable bars, mineral water is very much a prime example of the modern designer product and therefore an emblem of affluence and utmost stylishness.[100] The Buchs' food

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[97]Visser, Much Depends on Dinner 193.

[98]Barthes, Mythologies 62.

[99]Barthes, Mythologies 62.

[100]See Stephen Bayley for a comment on Perrier, Taste. The Secret Meaning of Things (London: faber and faber, 1991) 18.

choice is thus a combination of the crisp, the full-blooded, and the sparklingly clear and lucid. It is a modern day, up-to-the-minute gesture of balance, order and healthiness.

The Halms, in contrast to the trendily health-conscious Buchs, may be seen as reckless and careless in their somewhat immodest drinking of heavy "Spätburgunder" wine. Helmut alone consumes four quarter-litre carafes of this, the most expensive wine on the menu. Instead of the zeal of the modern trends and myths of gastronomy, the Halms' nonchalant diet emphasises a more traditional attitude towards eating and drinking which requires a so-called "healthy" appetite to be at the same time a large and expensive one. Seeing things from the opposing position, Klaus and Helene watch in muted horror as Helmut and Sabine also devour the contents of the cheese-board with white bread at the end of the meal. From the perspective of the Buchs' lifestyle, the Halms eat all the wrong kinds of food and yet, amazingly enough, they seem unconcerned. Their food choice is comprised of heavy carbohydrates which are fattening and high in cholesterol. In sustained excess, this diet will cause health problems such as poor circulation and obesity which, in turn, may lead to high blood pressure, possible coronary thrombosis, and finally death.

Similarly, it must be noted that both Klaus and Helene Buch earn their living by writing on the subject of food. Klaus is a journalist specialising in the environment, ecology

and nutrition. Helene, meanwhile, has published a book on herbs - a subject with its own innumerable myths and legends concerning the sustaining of life, youth and sexual potency, as well as counteracting poisons, and warding off evil from both the temple and the tomb. It seems then that there is a bias within the novel represented by the unexpected appearance of the Buchs and their attitude towards eating "good food."

In the spirit of Barthes' semiological theory, the pure matter of "good food" may be considered as the language object or signifier of a primary linguistic order, in much the same way as the signifier of "a large amount of food" in the previous chapter or Barthes' own example of "the steak" mentioned earlier. This linguistic signifier of "good food" is then assigned meaning by corresponding to an arbitrary social usage or the signified of "healthiness." There is no question about it, according to newspaper and magazine articles, cooking programmes on TV, the recent trend in vegetarian lifestyles and health food cookbooks, and scholarly journals or numerous national and international committees specialising in the field of food and nutrition, the eating of a high fibre, vitamin and mineral enriched, low fat, low salt, and low cholesterol diet is supposed to encourage a physically healthy body and therefore lengthen one's life expectancy. Eating only "the right food" or "what is good for you," and abstaining from the gratification of fattening foods, junk food or excesses of any kind, clearly denotes a healthy and

balanced life. Furthermore, it has been said since ancient times that a healthy body means a healthy mind. A diet of "the right food" thus appears to be justification enough for the general assumption of not only the solid state of one's physical health, but also the stable condition of one's intellect. So it is that the linguistic signified of food as the source of one's "health and aptitude" is added to the fact of "eating good food," just as "eating a lot" is added to "a victory" and "masculinity" to "steak" in the models previously discussed. The reader thus comes to understand the sum of the signifier and signified in the linguistic sign of "the health and aptitude of good food," once again, in the same way as "the victorious amount of food" or "the masculinity of steak."

However, it may be said that Klaus, "the good eater," is immediately marked by his choice of restaurant: he suggests going to the "Hecht"[101] and thus may be considered as a dandy. "Der Hecht" is the German word for "pike," a freshwater fish. However "ein feiner Hecht" is a fop or dandy, that is, a vain man excessively concerned with his looks and appearances, clothes and manners. Already then Klaus' choice of restaurant suggests a mythical relation to food, that his food, which is particularly "good," may be regarded as a fabrication or mere appearance especially designed to give a good impression.

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[101]Martin Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd. Novelle (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 26.

Furthermore, not only do Klaus and Helene Buch choose fundamentally different kinds of food to eat than do the Halms, they also appear to scrutinise what must seem to them as the Halm's reckless and thoroughly unhealthy excesses. This reminds Helmut of a story about the Swedish philosopher and Christian mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg.[102] The story, or fable, is of an alimentary kind. He describes how, while eating alone in a hotel room in London, Swedenborg suddenly noticed a man in the corner who then, at that moment, told him not to eat too much. After this event the philosopher would only ever partake in a roll soaked in hot milk and a lot of coffee with far too much sugar. This meal of supposed abstinence is certainly unusual. However, what becomes important to the Buchs is that Helmut has forgotten how many times per day Swedenborg may have taken this meal. In the ensuing discussion concerning the trivial anecdote Klaus remarks that Helmut has only ever been interested in quality and never in quantity. Helene is then quick to point out that quality is relativised by quantity and Klaus ironically tells Helmut not to eat too much.

By this token Klaus identifies himself as being overly concerned with quantity and its reduction. It may even be said that he shows mild symptoms of the eating disorder known as

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[102]It was Swedenborg's conviction that the true order of creation was disturbed by man's misuse of his free will and that man had turned his love from God to his own ego, thusly bringing evil into the world. Swedenborg, supposedly, also experienced grossly sexual dreams and religious visions.

anorexia nervosa. He appears to strictly regulate his eating out of a fear of becoming fat and, so, of being seen to be slovenly and unhealthy. He is reduced to silent horror when watching Helmut and Sabine Halm take great pleasure in eating, drinking and smoking. He also takes excessive exercise. He plays tennis at seven in the morning, takes hikes which last at least six hours, and regularly goes sailing. Later it is revealed that Klaus is preoccupied with collecting recipes, he reverts to pre-pubertal childhood and adolescence via his memory, immerses himself in his work, and also lacks confidence where his sexual behaviour is concerned. All of these features are typical of the behaviour of a sufferer of anorexia.[103]

It is thus the glaring difference in the attitude towards food selection between the two couples - that of impulsive pleasure compared to that of deliberate health-consciousness - as well as both the allusion to Klaus Buch's pretention and his fanatic scrutiny of the Halm's diet which draw the reader's attention to the possible presence of a myth in the portrayal of what is considered as "good food" in Ein fliehendes Pferd.

The Buchs' health food fanaticism may thus be considered as the object of a "second order semiological system." Indeed,

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[103]See George I. Szmukler, "The Psychopathology of Eating Disorders," Handbook of Psychophysiology of Human Eating, ed. Richard Shepherd (Chichester: Wiley, 1989) 273-299: 275 and 280.

in accordance with Barthes' everyday mythologies, this literary appropriation of the linguistic sign of "the health and aptitude of good food" may be viewed as the signifier or form of an overlapping mythical system. The Buchs' belief in "the health and aptitude of good food" in Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd occupies, therefore, much the same capacity as Bärlach's "victorious amount of food" in Dürrenmatt's Der Richter und sein Henker or "the masculinity of steak" in Barthes' example of the homesick French traveller, as mentioned above. In each case the mythical signifier takes after a pre-existent linguistic sign and yet, as a new mythical form, is emptied of its original linguistic meaning in order to serve a particular ideology.

In this respect, the literary example of the Buchs' eating only "the right food" can no longer be seen to represent the speculation of nutrition experts in scientific journals or the food trends of their popular counterparts in the mass media. Instead, this particular form of "the health and aptitude of good food" quoted by Walser in his novel is emptied of the above extra-textual discourse and made to serve the very intentions of one of the work's central themes, that is, the mythical signified or concept of "eternal health and aptitude." Unlike the arbitrary concept or signified of the linguistic level, the mythical signified is motivated by a particular ideology. In this case the concept of "health and aptitude" is influenced by the lifestyle and character of

Klaus Buch. This pattern is, of course, comparable to that in Dürrenmatt's novel where the linguistic sign of "a victorious amount of food" was seen to be stolen by the author to become the empty form serving the intentions of the mythical concept of Bärlach's "victory." Likewise, Barthes saw the nostalgic sign of "the masculinity of steak" coming to the assistance of the homesick French traveller.

However, just as Bärlach's image of "victory" was driven by his desire to solve a crime and thus was falsely equated with justice, and the French traveller's patriotic craving for "the strength and masculinity of steak" was then dubiously attributed to the particular fact of being French, so it is that the concept of "healthiness" peculiar to Klaus must be seen in the context of his fear of death. Though on the primary level the portrayal of Klaus eating "the right food" denotes "healthiness," on the secondary textual-mythical level his health fanaticism is far from arbitrary. Indeed, it is associated with the (historical) intention of immortality. The Buchs live under a strict self-imposed regime of exercise and abstention from "the wrong kinds of food" as Klaus is utterly terrified of dying. In chapter seven the issue of age and growing old is touched upon during a polite conversation over lunch. Helmut Halm declares he does not want to grow any older than seventy. (From this one may gather that, as his reckless eating may imply, he is not frightened of death so much as old age and losing his mental capacities.) In contrast, the Buchs

both want to live to an old age. They are obviously afraid of dying and cite their long-living parents as good examples to follow. Walser thus makes the connection between the mythical form of "the health and aptitude of good food" with the concept of "eternal health and aptitude." Motivated by the theme of immortality he falsely equates the image of "healthy eating" with longevity, and thus convinces the reader of the myth of "immortality when eating good food."

Klaus' fear of death is, at first, ironically reflected in Helmut's attitude towards his own eating, drinking and smoking habits. Initially detached from any possible detrimental implications of his diet, Helmut begins to feel guilty after meeting the overtly health-conscious Klaus. Using the above model of the mythology of "immortality when eating good food" as the basis of my analysis, I shall now explore further the development of the relationship between the two men and their respective lifestyles. Seeing as Helmut begins to show some compunction in the way he eats, it is to be expected that the myth will adapt itself according to the dynamic feature of the plot.

From the very beginning of the novel Walser insinuates that Helmut Halm is a big eater. His corpulence is pointed out in that the café chairs appear as if they are too small for him and that, without a jacket, the passers-by only see "von ihm wahrscheinlich nichts als seinen Bauch."[104] Indeed, he

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[104]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 10.

is described as being heavy with a rounded back and a paunch.[105] However, Helmut does not initially seem too worried about his weight. On the contrary, it appears as if he is both generally contented with his life and absurdly conscious of the mortal fate of humanity. As the following quote reveals, he indulges in life's little pleasures, such as food, albeit perhaps with a tinge of guilt:

> Sabine sagte: Du bist doch nicht nervös. [...] Er sagte: Nervös?! Wie kommst du denn darauf? Sie sagte: Hast du Hunger? Hunger, sagte er auf eine ernsthafte romantische Art. Sollen wir gehen, fragte sie. In die Wohnung, sagte er. Nein zum Essen, sagte sie. Hast du Hunger, fragte er. Wir hätten nach dem Mittagessen nicht soviel Kuchen essen dürfen, sagte sie. Du hast ihn gebacken, sagte er. Ich weiß, sagte sie schuldbewußt. Wenn du ihn wenigstens nicht so gut machen würdest, sagte er dumpf. Eine Rettung gibt's sowieso nicht, dachte er. Er wußte nicht, warum er das dachte. Rette den Menschen, dachte er. Rett' ihn doch.[106]

However, a polarity between the two men, their lifestyles and their eating habits, can be traced as soon as Klaus' makes his sudden appearance. Both want to look successful, yet Klaus may be seen to achieve this by restricting his diet and projecting himself as slim and healthy. The effect on both the reader and Helmut is that this character appears as if he is infallible and will live forever. Walser is making use of the classic opposition between fat and thin. Klaus' teasing of Helmut not to eat too much is no mere witticism. For him, a casual attitude towards eating would clearly signal failure

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[105]See Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 15.

[106]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 16-17.

and perhaps even death. In her study of the ordinary meal, Visser points out the social implications of the battle with the bulge:

> Being thin [...] is a status symbol trailing connotations of youth, modernity, health, education, and money. [...] Being fat has come to be regarded as too easy, and as poor in taste. A thin body suggests discipline and competence in the face of a world which is perceived as ever more complicated and dangerous. The sufferings undergone by slimmers, the hours of jogging and lifting weights, the self-denial, and the acquisition of know-how required to 'think thin,' are gladly undergone by the privileged classes: it is aristocratic and self-centred austerity - an entirely different matter from abstremiousness imposed by necessity. Those members of the poorer classes who want to escape their image find that being thin can be an essential first step.[107]

With regard to the above assumptions of adept thinness and slovenly fatness, it may also be said that Helmut, once confronted with Klaus' health fanaticism, soon becomes doubtful about his own way of life.

This point may be demonstrated in the Buchs' disdain of the Halms' drinking wine and smoking. At first, Helmut remarks that he is pleased to have bumped into the other couple, if not for their company then at least for the wine he was able to enjoy. He also insists that his cigars have never tasted so good because now they have the added flavour of criminality acquired by being smoked in front of Klaus and Helene. Yet this is a lie. The narrator explains that "als [Helmut] bemerkte, daß die [Buchs] sein Rauchen mit einer

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[107]Visser, Much Depends on Dinner 109.

erschütternden Teilnahme beobachten, hatte ihm das Rauchen nicht mehr so geschmeckt wie sonst."[108] By being examined at such close quarters as he eats, drinks and smokes, Helmut is being forced by others, who are contemplating the nature of his existence, to do the very same. His cigars do not taste as sweet as usual because he is aware of their potentially damaging effect on his health. He is being made to feel guilty and anxious about his way of life. These feelings reoccur later in the novel. In chapter five Helmut again believes his cigars and wine do not taste as good as before:

> Helmut spürte, daß ihm heute Zigarren und Wein schon weniger schmeckten als am Tag zuvor. Er hatte Angst, er könne seine Gewohnheiten gegen dieses Paar nicht verteidigen. Die griffen ihn ununterbrochen an. Beide. Die machten ihn fertig. Es genügte, mit denen am Tisch zu sitzen, um sich widerlegt zu fühlen.[109]

Once again Helmut feels as if taking pleasure in eating, drinking and smoking, is utterly indefensible against the display of the Buchs' self-reverentiality. His habits are not healthy and so he may be seen as poor and slovenly, incompetent and inadequate. Clearly, he feels threatened by the culinary "Angriff dieses Eß- und Seesportlers."[110]

After the first meal, Helmut feels as if he has overeaten: he is worried and, consequently, is unable to fall asleep. He wishes he were drunk and could forget the evening's

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[108]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 35.

[109]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 61-62.

[110]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 57.

events. The Halm's wine stands in stark contrast to the water which the Buchs consume so eagerly. Later, Helmut remarks that an evening without wine would paradoxically leave him feeling paralysed. He is astonished how mere water lends Klaus and Helene an air of such vivacity, whereas he needs at least one glass of wine before even daring to open his mouth. While discussing the mythical connotations of wine in French society, Barthes stresses the contrast between this essentially dry substance and the moistness of water.[111] Wine is thus the antithesis of the sign system of "the health and aptitude of good food" and, additionally, may be seen to possess its own individual mythology. Perhaps, Helmut drinks wine in part for its own connotation of intellectuality and bourgeois status. He most definitely drinks simply to get drunk and therefore to forget. Barthes also maintains that the power of the mythology of wine is a force to be reckoned with. It is part of a mechanism which - as he sees it - reverses and represses reality:

> [Wine] is above all a converting substance, capable of reversing situations and states, and of extracting from objects their opposites - for instance, making a weak man strong or a silent one talkative. Hence its old alchemical heredity, its philosophical power to transmute and create ex nihilo.[112]

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[111]See Barthes, Mythologies 58.

[112]Barthes, Mythologies 58.

Embarrassed by the fact that he feels "wie ein Fleischesser unter Vegetariern,"[113] that is, paranoid that he should be singled out for critical observation, Helmut calls upon the soporific effect of wine to suppress his anxiety. However, in the context of this novel and the myth of "immortality when eating good food," the red wine seems to have lost its quality of transmutability and, instead, viewed simply as an alcoholic beverage which may dull the senses, it can only be considered as hazardous. Helmut is left, unable to sleep, feeling guilty about his lifestyle and, therefore, worried about death.

In chapter six Helmut returns Klaus' earlier invitation to dinner and so the two couples partake in a second meal and thus the next culinary confrontation. They all begin with soup which serves the purpose of both, alimentarily, whetting the appetite and stimulating the digestive tract. When Helmut asks Sabine whether she has enjoyed the meal, Klaus bursts in hysterically declaring that the breading on the schnitzel was too thick, that the meat was pork instead of veal and finally that the salad was limp. The meal is clearly an affront to Klaus' healthy modernism. Wittingly or otherwise, his derogative comments on the food may be seen as an offensive mounted against Helmut. He points out that the food is fatty, heavy, sloppy and therefore loathsome and unhealthy. Helmut's remark however, that "das Essen ausgezeichnet gewesen

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[113]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 36.

sei,"[114] shows how he does not suffer from any lower self-esteem after having apparently enjoyed eating a meal that Klaus considers reckless.[115] Walser thus shows Helmut still generally satisfied with his lifestyle in spite of feeling severely threatened by Klaus' dietetic assault. By analogy, the reader may understand that Helmut still does not feel too troubled by the prospect of death implied in his nonchalant food choice.

The two couples do not eat dessert at the end of the meal and so are not softened to "the blow of departure, that plunge into the void which engulfs the eaters until their next indulgence."[116] Indeed, Helmut's sense of security is short lived. As if Klaus' criticism of Helmut's eating habits were in itself insufficient, soon the school teacher will come to realise the extent to which his fanatical friend is a threat to his well-being. Seeing a runaway horse subdued by Klaus acting the dare-devil serves as ample demonstration for Helmut to understand, albeit symbolically, how he is in danger of being manipulated by Klaus, who appears to possess the quality

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[114]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 84.

[115]Sara Gilbert points out that "Kaplan and Wadden (1986) have concluded on the basis of their survey of 851 children that the level of self-esteem in the obese children was no different from that in children of normal weight. Obesity can undoubtedly be a crippling social disability, but its effects on the emotional life and self-esteem of the individual may vary considerably." "Psychological Aspects of Obesity and its Treatment," Handbook of Psychophysiology of Human Eating, ed. Richard Shepherd (Chichester: Wiley, 1989) 301-319: 303.

[116]Jean-Paul Aron qtd. in Bayley, Taste 194.

of physical agility and daring that he, a man of the same age, evidently lacks.

However, to return to the specifics of the mythical appropriation of the linguistic sign of "the health and aptitude of good food," it can also be said that Klaus' reaction to Helmut's choice of food may be taken as an indication of the young-acting journalist's own psychological fears. As has already been mentioned, he normally "undereats" for fear of gaining weight and losing his physique - his only attribute - and thus of being seen to be unhealthy and inept. In light of this fact, I feel it is necessary to reiterate that food may be regarded as a language-system which, during its transition from the linguistic to the mythical (or literary) level, is stolen and restored specifically to convey a distorted meaning in the name of a particular ideology. A restricted diet of only "the right food" is thus a fabrication or lie designed to conceal certain underlying conditions. Where the character of Klaus is concerned, Walser has stolen the language of "the health and aptitude of good food" to convey the message that he will live forever. This fabrication which falsely equates psychological speculation with the physiological facts of life thus enables Walser to conceal the reality that Klaus is terrified of the prospect of death, that he is afraid of being sexually inadequate, and that he is worried about losing his mental capacities.

If this myth were not in place, Klaus Buch's psychological fears would be transparent to both Helmut and the reader. His personality would then in this case be seen as inferior to that of Helmut Halm. This would not suit the author's intentions. Indeed, in Ein fliehendes Pferd, Walser documents the clash of two opposing characters, and yet it is his express desire not to show the endorsement of one lifestyle over another. To this effect Walser prefaces his novel with the following quotation from the work Either/Or[117] by the Danish religious philosopher and founder of Existentialist thought, Sören Kierkegaard:

> Man trifft zuweilen auf Novellen, in denen bestimmte Personen entgegensetzte Lebensanschauungen vortragen. Das endet dann gerne damit, daß der eine den andern überzeugt. Anstatt daß also die Anschauung für sich sprechen muß, wird der Leser mit dem historischen Ergebnis bereichert, daß der andre überzeugt worden ist. Ich sehe es für einen Glück an, daß in solcher Hinsicht diese Papiere eine Aufklärung nicht gewähren.[118]

It is asserted in this particular extract that novels have the habit of portraying two people's opposing ways of looking at life and that by the end of a work one character has been convinced by the other. Kierkegaard maintains that in such a situation the reader will be enriched, that one mode of living

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[117]Published under a pseudonym in 1843, Kierkegaard's philosophical work Either/Or: A Fragment of Life proposes the choice between an aesthetic or an ethico-religious mode of life while intentionally abstaining from any authorial endorsement of one over the other.

[118]Sören Kierkegaard qtd. in Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd vii.

has been persuaded by the other, and so the difficult choice between the two is made for him/her. He concludes, however, that he sees it as a great fortune that his work, Either/Or, in no way professes to offer such a resolution. It is thus by association to this particular quotation that any analysis of Ein fliehendes Pferd must take into account the fact that the author is setting out to present two opposing personalities without meaning to proclaim the authority of one over the other. It is the reader's explicit task to judge or choose between the two. Furthermore, the fact that Walser reveals exactly those fears and problems which lay beneath Klaus' image of apparent immortality at precisely the moment when he seems to have the upper hand over Helmut, must again be viewed with respect to the authorial intention intimated in the above quote. Walser is thus able to avoid endorsing Klaus' healthy lifestyle over Helmut's more traditional and reckless one.

Klaus eventually confesses his insecurities to Helmut when out sailing. He thus confidentially reveals his anxieties to Helmut and, still in admiration for his former school friend, suggests a type of partnership of his own apparent physical and Helmut's mental fitness. However, he unwittingly exposes himself from under his own layer of mythical appearances built up in the language of good food and exercise as suffering from anxieties remarkably similar to those felt by Helmut: that is, he is a workaholic, fears he is sexually inadequate, and in contrast to Helmut, is terrified of dying.

In the ensuing sudden and violent storm, in which Klaus once again dangerously plays at being a dare-devil as if to prove his physical competence, Helmut, scared for his life, kicks the tiller out of Klaus' hands causing him to be thrown overboard to his certain death.

In the final chapter Helene, Klaus' wife, visits the Halms and begins to indulge in all the wrong kinds of food. With the disappearance of her husband the myth of "immortality when eating good food" must seem not to have worked after all. She drinks coffee and eats cake. This scene, which Helmut describes as "ekelhaft feierlich,"[119] amounts to a substitute for the ritual of the funeral meal whereby the merits of the recently deceased are usually celebrated. After years of abstention from self-indulgent food, Helene's resumption of eating cake and drinking coffee has the affect of removing the mask of the myth of immortality. She is no longer afraid of death and finds no need to postpone it for, as her husband's apparent death stands to testify, it will happen no matter the measures one takes to avoid it. Previously she was caught up in a mythical system which appeared to prolong youth and health due to her husband's fear of being inadequate and dying as an unsuccessful man. Now she is beginning to live "normally," perhaps even recklessly: to follow the Halms' way of doing things.

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[119]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 132.

Helene then drinks more coffee. This daily beverage is a known stimulant and poison. As Tannahill remarks without any sensationalism intended, "caffeine, the natural stimulant in coffee, is fatal to humans at a dose of about one-third of an ounce."[120] After the coffee, Helene begins to drink Calvados. This type of brandy from Normandy is fermented from cider made from either apples or pears. The Calvados reminds her of the time when she lived in France, when she really lived life to the full and did not exist according to Klaus' regime of restriction, healthy pretences and faddishness. Her indulgence is liberating and she reveals the truth that Klaus was a fraud, that he was a workaholic and was ruined.[121]

Helmut, in contrast, now abstains from smoking, drinking and heedless eating. He has just witnessed the death of a man who shared very much his own fears of existence. This experience is, therefore, analogous to seeing himself die: a type of negative near-death experience. As a result, Helmut, himself, is suddenly concerned with the state of his health and becomes scared of death. He changes his habits accordingly. This explains his sudden abstention from the detrimental pleasures of life. He increases his effort to stay

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[120]Reay Tannahill, Food in History (1973; New York: Crown, 1989) 343.

[121]Joachim Schote also makes this point that in resuming to eat in a manner more akin to the Halms, Helene is finally able to re-emerge from behind the figure of her husband to tell the truth about the appearances maintained by his conversation. "Martin Walsers Novelle Ein fliehendes Pferd," Orbis Literarum 46 (1991) 52-63: 58.

alive and hold onto his youth. He wants to start running and cycling, and thus replace his former recklessness with a healthy existence that includes exercise.

Suddenly, however, Klaus returns "from the dead" and stands before them as if evidence itself of redemption. Helene carries on drinking and smoking, she has already exposed the myth and so Klaus simply leaves again taking her with him before she can do any more damage. Only after the Buchs have left does Helmut smoke and drink again. He returns to his former reckless indulgences as his brush with death is cancelled and the man with the same worries as he is still firmly alive.

So it is that the balanced, ordered and healthy food selected by the Buchs is nothing more than a designer façade, or mechanism ironically comparable to Helmut's own system of appearances which he terms as his "Scheinproduktionsfront."[122] The delusion of this façade is not perceived by the other characters who, much like the reader, accept it as "natural." It is thus used by Walser initially to convince both Helmut and the reader of the eternally healthy appearance of Klaus and, therefore, the preeminence of his lifestyle. The language of modern food trends has been stolen (perhaps subconsciously) to maintain a myth which enables the couple essentially both to conceal their fear of dying and to steep praise upon themselves while

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[122]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 69.

simultaneously judging and offending the "bad" tastes of others. Their reaction to the Halms' eating habits bears witness to this fact:

> Ihr Mineralwassertrinken lobten sie so, als müßten Halms das so rasch als möglich nachmachen. Und wie sie selbst Mineralwasser noch beurteilen konnten! [...] Sie machten Helmut und Sabine herzliche Vorwürfe wegen deren bedenkensloser Art zu essen und zu trinken.[123]

However, within the dynamic framework of the novel, the myth of "immortality when eating good food" is first shifted and then exposed. After Klaus' apparent death, it is then Helmut who adopts a regime of eating only "the right food" believing this sufficient to stave off the reality of death. Meanwhile, Helene, now free of her husband's jurisdiction, abandons such abstinent behaviour and exposes it, and her husband, as utter fraud. By making use of the mythical order of "immortality when eating good food" Walser effectively conceals the psychological truth. By thus disclosing the truth that lays behind such a mythical layer - in Klaus' confession of his anxieties and Helene's revelation of her husband's duplicity - the author shows how one man's attempt to control his destiny is equally as illusory and, thus, neither of the two respective lifestyles is favoured over the other. It is in just such an atmosphere of ambiguity that the reader is left to choose.

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[123]Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd 31.

6. Ingeborg Drewitz's Gestern war Heute: Food as a Danger Zone

Although it can be said that the priority of Ingeborg Drewitz's novel, Gestern war Heute,[124] is to reproduce the everyday reality of family life, the novel must also be regarded as a report on how particularly the women in that family are effected by and deal with the dichotomy between the process of emancipation and the underlying structure of human society based on the family unit. Food, however, shown as the age-old familial responsibility of women, also plays a significant role. In spite of the socio-historical and political upheavals in the world, there is always room found in the text to mention food and eating. This may take the form of a fleeting description of food as part of the daily routine or a more detailed account of a special occasion such as the event of Christmas. However, throughout the course of the novel, and therefore over the period of fifty-five years of modern history, the food remains essentially the same with the particular regularity of staples such as potatoes, bread,

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[124]Published in 1978, Gestern war Heute. Hundert Jahre Gegenwart is an autobiographical novel which documents the personal history of five generations of women from one family living in Berlin between 1923 and 1978. The work is a first-person-narrative written from the perspective of the journalist Gabriele M. who attempts to reconcile the world of being a wife and mother with the fact of her career. The broader events of German history function as a backdrop to the story. The family is seen to live through the inflation of the twenties and the rise of fascism, the Second World War and the capitulation of Germany, the restoration under Adenauer and the student demonstrations of the sixties and seventies.

apples and coffee. Indeed, an analysis of the common occurrence in daily life of eating from the perspective of the food itself seems to reveal how, just as the title of the novel suggests, though history is constantly evolving, the rudiments of society show little change.

As mentioned above, the portrayal of food in the novel is always related to women as an integral part of their familial obligation and, it may therefore be implied, their general role in life. Already the very first sub-chapter appears to set a precedent for the rest of the novel. The "alte Frau" of the first generation is set down out of harm's way after starting a fire with a petroleum lamp in her room while Susanne, the only child of the third generation, is giving birth. It is then remarked that an old person is nothing but "ein unnützer Esser."[125] With the arrival of an extra mouth to feed, the old woman may feel as if she is an unnecessary economic burden on the family. Certainly where the capitalist means of (re-)production are concerned, she is too old to carry out any useful task and, therefore, may be considered as unproductive. Her former roles as, initially, a child-bearer and, then, the primary care-giver are now taken over by women from the younger generations of the family. While Susanne, her granddaughter, is in the process of actually giving birth to Gabriele, the old woman's daughter, Alice, otherwise referred

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[125]Ingeborg Drewitz, Gestern war Heute. Hundert Jahre Gegenwart (Düsseldorf: Claassen, 1978) 8.

to as Lieschen, is described making coffee and offering the midwife some "Streuselkuchen," a thin cake made with a leavened dough and an almond crumble topping, which has been left over from Christmas. The inefficiency of the "alte Frau" implied in this scene goes to show that the work of women, at this time, is deemed restricted uniquely to the two responsibilities of childbirth and the preparation of food.

Indeed, throughout the novel, the realm of food and the everyday role of women are seen to be virtually synonymous. The text is punctuated with numerous references to the image of women at work in the kitchen. They peel potatoes for lunch or apples to make compote, get breakfast ready for the whole family, spoon-feed their children, prepare a snack of bread and coffee for their husbands, organise a child's birthday party, drain the fat from the Christmas goose and so on. It is in this light that the pure matter of "the realm of food and sustenance" may be regarded as the language object, or signifier, of a primary linguistic order. This is similar to Barthes' example of the linguistic signifier of "the steak" mentioned earlier. The signifier of "the realm of food and sustenance" is then seen to obtain meaning by relating to the arbitrary social usage, or signified, of "women's work," just as "strength and masculinity" are added to "the steak" in Barthes' model. These two elements of the signifier and the signified join together to imply the linguistic sign that "a woman's place is in the kitchen." This image may be understood

by the reader as a "naturally" occurring phenomenon in much the same way as one accepts "the masculinity of steak."

However, this primary language regarding the notion that "women belong in the kitchen" is an expression of a world where only the concerns of men are taken seriously. As Gabriele herself complains within the text, the lives of women are prescribed by their relation to men, that her body and her time are not her own, and that she is there, like all women, merely to act according to the demands and expectations of her husband and children. From both a first-person and an interchangeable pseudo-third-person narration, she points out that she is conforming to a role which she cannot envisage ever seeing through:

> Die Rolle, ich lerne eine Rolle. Ich lerne, daß ich nicht BIN, um zu sein, sondern um zu sorgen. Ich lerne, daß ich einen Rücken habe, um das Kind abzuschirmen, daß ich Brüste habe, die Milch geben, ich spüre das Drängen der Milch, die Lust des gierig saugenden Mundes. Ich gebe mich preis. [...] Sie hat nicht gewußt, daß das möglich ist, in einer Rolle zuhause sein, Pflichten erfüllen von morgens bis abends, baden und windeln und füttern und windeln und füttern. [...] Sie hat nicht gewußt, daß das möglich ist, in einer Rolle zuhause zu sein, hat mit Waschen und Kochen und Einkaufen zu tun. [...] Bin ich jetzt glücklich? Ich lerne eine Rolle. Ich lerne, lerne. [...] Und mit einemmal spürt sie, daß sie die Rolle nicht durchhalten wird, nicht durchhalten kann: Sorgen statt ICH sagen, Ordnung halten, den Müll wegbringen, von der Erschöpfung geduckt, emsig.[126]

In this way, by concentrating on the monotonous and generally unfulfilling role of women in the family as servants

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[126]Drewitz, Gestern war Heute 210-212.

whose job it is to provide care and nourishment for their men and children, Drewitz shows how a woman's everyday dealing with food may be regarded as one of "the essential structures of her oppression."[127] This disclosure may be seen in the broader context of modern women's literature, the central aim of which is to rectify the absence of a history of feminine experience written from a woman's point of view. Up until this time, with the overwhelming majority of authors being male and socio-economic dominance the prerogative of men, the portrayal of women in literature may be regarded as the result of a uniquely male perspective. It may thus be considered as biased in favour of men. Indeed, often the image of women promoted was one which inevitably adhered to the preservation of society as a patriarchal structure and did not, therefore, see it necessary to discuss the greater realities of women's lives. By and large, women were presented as the submissive component of the family unit. Feminist ideology, however, has a contrary argument to put forward. Modern feminist writers have thus made it their particular objective to demystify the traditional construct of the family idyll - of the father-mother-child triad - as a covert mechanism of male oppression of women. By remaining at home to tend to the children and

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[127]See Ann Foreman, Femininity as Alienation: Women and the Family in Marxism and Psychoanalysis (London: Pluto, 1977) 102, qtd. in Evelyn Torton Beck and Biddy Martin, "Westdeutsche Frauenliteratur der siebziger Jahre," Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965. Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein/Taunus: Athenäum, 1980) 135-149: 136.

carry out domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning, a mother not only leads a very tedious existence, but she is unable to earn her own independent living. Her work is not salaried, rather she is expected to do all the things she does for love. Furthermore, if a woman were to seek employment it is likely her job would once again be deemed "women's work" - such as typing, cleaning, cooking or child-care - and so would be paid at a lower rate than "men's work." Consequently, even "working women" remain completely dependent upon their husbands for financial support. By giving a true voice to the experiences of women in the home and at work, female writers have succeeded in (re)appropriating literary language to show the everyday nature of the control men have over the lives of women.

In this respect, it may be said that in order to stress the very oppressive nature of "women's work," that is, their intimate relation to men, Drewitz portrays food in a particularly negative light. First of all the food itself is often bland and spoiled. In the episode mentioned above concerning the "alte Frau" the "Streuselkuchen" is so stale that it can only be eaten by being dunked into coffee. Similarly, in chapter four when Susanne performs the mundane task of peeling apples to make compote, the fruit is described as having already withered, the skin is leathery and the flesh is blemished. The apples are placed on the gas stove to cook with sugar and cinnamon. When she returns the cinnamon to the

spice rack, the various fragrances of the spices combine momentarily to reveal an almost unimaginable and potentially more fulfilling world to Susanne, though this is quickly obscured once again by the monotonous reality of her work and immediate environment:

> Sie hat das Gas angezündet und hält die Hände über dem blaugelben Flammenkranz. Sie spürt die Wärme in den Handtellern. Tröstlich. Dann setzt sie die Äpfel auf, nimmt die Tüte mit den Zimtstangen aus dem Gewürzfach, bricht eine durch und wirft sie in den Topf, faltet die Tüte wieder zusammen und legt sie ins Fach zurück. Sie atmet tief ein. Zimt, Nelken, Majoran, Vanille, Zitronenöl, Mandeln, Pfeffer und Pfefferminz, Muskatnuß. Blumenfelder und gelber Himmel, schwarzgrüne Wildnis, Unvorstellbares, rote Wüsten und silbrige Moose, Süden und Norden, behutsam schließt sie das Gewürzfach wieder. Das Schnattern eines Wasserrohres, die Stimmen in der Küche eine Treppe höher, das Gurgeln des Wassers, in dem die Äpfel garen, machen die Bilder zunichte.[128]

As her husband sets off to join the Nazi Party, a measure he believes will help him gain employment, she stares in silence at the decaying apple peel as the inside turns brown. The stewed apples are now reduced to a mushy, grey-green unappetising compote.

Furthermore, not only is the everyday preparation of food and meals shown to be monotonous and limiting for the women of the family, it also appears that the realm of food may be imprisoning, repressive and even fatal. Drewitz's (re)appropriation of literary language, and particularly the language-system of food therefore, seems to emphasise the very

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[128]Drewitz, Gestern war Heute 67.

dangers of "the realm of food and sustenance as women's work." The link between women's lives and their oppressive relation with men is most clearly demonstrated by the example of the potato. Rivalled only by bread as the foundation of the German diet, the potato provides many of the nutrients necessary for human survival. The plant itself may be considered as industrious, yielding numerous edible tubers. It is also sturdy and filling. An analysis of its portrayal in this novel in relation to women, however, reveals a lack of genuine social progress at best and death at worst. In fact, the first time the reader encounters the potato it is associated with the death of a hard-working woman. "Mutter," Susanne's grandmother on her father's side of the family, dies by falling down the stairs while carrying a sack of potatoes. From then on, with the exception of the image of Gabriele's father who gluttonously eats a mountain of potatoes, each time this item of food appears it is being peeled by the hands of a working woman. The peeling of potatoes is the most mundane and time-consuming of common kitchen chores - and here it is a far cry from its romantic portrayal in Günter Grass' famous novel Der Butt. Indeed, it may be said that the potato simultaneously symbolises the monotony and the continual oppression of women's lives. When the "alte Frau" dies, it perhaps comes as no surprise to learn that that morning she had been peeling potatoes. The image of "natural" repression continues when, immediately after hanging up her wedding gown,

Gabriele assumes her role as a wife by peeling potatoes for the first meal of her married life. Later, after her own mother has died, she remarks that she wishes she had a photograph of her in the kitchen, or standing in a queue for potatoes. For a moment, however, Gabriele breaks away from this oppressive system of providing food and sustenance. When she leaves her husband, Jörg, to pursue a career of her own (though taking their children with her) ironically she makes sure there is enough food for him to last a few days. However, when she is already on the train, she realises she had not peeled any potatoes for him! She is suddenly liberated from her traditional role prescribed by men for women. Later she writes telling him how pleased she is no longer having to ask him if the food is to his liking. When she returns to Jörg a short while later after giving birth to her third daughter Claudia, Gabriele finds herself once again assuming the mundane role of the traditional housewife. Her day revolves around taking care of the children and, of course, the task of peeling potatoes:

> Der tägliche Weg, die Milchkanne in der Einkaufstasche, Regen und Schneematsch und manchmal der gläserne Vorfrühlingshimmel schon im Januar, die üblichen Gespräche über Preise und Wetter beim Milchmann, bei der Gemüsefrau, die Freundlichkeiten für das Kind. Und nach Hause kommen, Claudia ausziehen und schlafen legen, Gemüse putzen, Kartoffeln schälen, dünne Spiralen, wie Großmutter und Urgroßmutter sie geschält haben, Gemüse aufsetzen, Kartoffeln aufsetzen; wenn Renate um

> halb eins kommt, hat sie Hunger. Kann sich ein Mann so einen Tag vorstellen?[129]

Drewitz's particular literary portrayal of the oppressive nature of food may be regarded, according to the terminology of Barthes' theory of language-systems, as the second order semiological system of a woman's perspective which has been built upon a pre-existent male understanding of the realm of food. In this respect, the image of "the woman's place in the kitchen" may be regarded as the mythical signifier, or form, in the same way as Barthes' "the masculinity of steak." This form, however, in the transition from the (male) linguistic to the (feminist) mythical level has been emptied of its arbitrary social usage or independent history of women as care-givers. Instead, this signifier now obtains a new meaning by corresponding to a mythical signified, or distorted concept, which in this case is motivated by the historical or ideological intention of the author. As mentioned above, Drewitz's work belongs very much within the field of feminist literature whose ideology regards food as a tool of oppression. In a sense, women writers are stealing back language from men, or reclaiming it to reveal the different truth of their particular experience. In this light, and from the opinion that the care given by women is unfairly devalued, the mythical signified may be identified as "the oppressive nature of 'women's work.'" Drewitz thus connects the mythical

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[129]Drewitz, Gestern war Heute 279.

form of "the woman's place in the kitchen" with the concept of "the oppressive nature of women's work." This may then be seen in the same way as Barthes' example of the homesick French traveller who falsely relates the concept of masculinity with being French in order to comfort himself with the myth of "the Frenchness of steak" while abroad. Motivated by feminist ideology, Drewitz cleverly equates the oppressive structures of society - such as the undervalued realm of "women's work" - with the perils of food, itself, such as monotony, blandness, getting fat, food poisoning, etc. It is in this way that the author establishes the convincing myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone." Indeed, the reader soon comes to understand that the only way a woman will ever become free from the oppressive nature of contemporary society is for her to escape from the confines of the kitchen.

By mears of the operation of this myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone" in the novel, Drewitz is able to insinuate the - perhaps inadvertent - proliferation of the oppression of women within the family unit. The average Sunday lunch during the inflation years of the twenties serves as a more than adequate illustration. It is nonetheless a sturdy affair of meat, potatoes and gravy. The meal is eaten in an observed silence, slowly and methodically. Indeed, there appears to be a collusion between the grotesque manner in which the members of the family eat and a listless acceptance of the present state of their lives. Though the family is

obviously poor and there is only meat on Sundays, it seems that one may at least depend on the present socio-economic system for food and sustenance. The grandfather, Gustav, chews his food with much deliberation. Gabriele's father greedily helps himself to an exceedingly large portion of potatoes. His wife, Susanne, however, takes only some sauce in an act of self-sacrifice so that the other members of the family may take more. Finally, too weak to feed herself properly, the "alte Frau" lets the gravy run down her chin in her haste to eat before all the food is consumed by the father.

Here it may be seen how in order to bring to light the sacrificial and so "oppressive nature of women's lives," Drewitz initiates the myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone." The meal itself is bland and unappetising, yet it is only the three-year-old Gabriele who is nauseated by the scene. She is fed by her mother who mashes up the food - potatoes, meat and gravy - until it must resemble a plate of brown, stagnant paste. Alluding then to the repulsive notions of foul-smelling and half-eaten food, Drewitz describes how the child refuses to swallow, storing the food in the corner of her mouth and eventually spitting it out onto the centre of her plate to the horror and indignation of the rest of the family. The child's disgusting interruption of the ordered familial scene shows her revulsion and nausea towards the preparation and presentation of the bland food and how she feels stifled by the family set-up. Her unemployed father

seems to get all the food whereas her mother, who does all the work in the home, eats next to nothing. In a broader context, it may thus be regarded as a melodramatic rejection of the present system which even lacks a fundamental human attitude to food and eating, prolongs poverty and suffering, and fails to make either any material or social progress, especially where the emancipation of women from their lives as cooks and care-givers is concerned. As she grows up, Gabriele, herself, will be torn between conforming to and refusing the norms of (patriarchal) society. As a young woman she will marry, but then leave her restraining husband to pursue her own life only to return to the family unit later.

In their article on 1970s women's literature from West Germany, Beck and Martin point out that the focus of modern feminist texts rests with the very extent to which men control the everyday lives of women.[130] Indeed, the situations such works describe are by no means out of the ordinary and yet they more than adequately portray the restrictions, prejudices, insensitivities and general powerlessness faced on a daily basis by women in a man's world. It is thus revealed how women live, breathe and speak the authority of men which, in turn, consistently finds ever more subtle ways of enforcing itself. This, as Beck and Martin maintain, includes areas strictly considered as the domain of women such as the

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[130]See Beck and Martin, "Westdeutsche Frauenliteratur" 138.

everyday realm of food. In order to illustrate this point, they refer to the description of a typical lunchtime scene from Brigitte Schwaiger's Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer? This quotation, however, also serves my purpose of the discussion of the myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone." The mother is anxious, fears inadequacy and eventually is made to feel guilty. The hazards she faces, such as displeasing her husband and, thus, essentially being wrong in the eyes of the figure of authority, are instilled in "the realm of food and sustenance as women's work" and are clearly indicated in the following no-win-situation:

> Zu Mittag herrschte immer Nervosität, die aus der Stimme und den Gesten meiner Mutter spürbar wurde, wenn Vater sich an den Tisch gesetzt hatte. Mutter nahm die Fleischstücke aus der Pfanne. Ich reichte ihr Vaters Teller. Gemurmel. Kleiner Ärger. Zweifel, Zögern. Dieses Stück für Vater? Nein, für Vater das magere. Er mag kein Fett. Wer sagt, daß ich kein Fett mag? Warum gibt es keine Suppe. Also, sagte Mutter, wenn ich zu diesem Fleisch eine Suppe mache, dann fragst du, warum ich eine Suppe gemacht habe. Und wenn es keine gibt, dann fragst du, warum ich keine Suppe gemacht habe! Ein Löffel wäre nicht schlecht, sagte der Vater dann bescheiden, und Mutter fühlte sich schuldig. Immer schwebte ein Damoklesschwert über ihr, und so war es an allen Mittagen.[131]

The above quote also alludes to the part the mother plays in conditioning her daughter to serve her father, and thus in preparing her for her role later in life. It appears then that there is a further dimension of oppression which is initiated

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[131]Brigitte Schwaiger, Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer? (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 1977) 47-48, qtd. in Beck and Martin, "Westdeutsche Frauenliteratur" 138.

by women themselves. Indeed, communication about the identity of women through the bonding of the mother and daughter seems already to take place during a woman's childhood through the medium of food. Beck and Martin also remark that it is often the mothers themselves "die die Aufgabe der Zähmung erfüllen."[132] So it is that by their own example mothers, whether wittingly or not, habitually offer their daughters no other option than to become what they are themselves.

Bearing in mind the above point of the mother-daughter relationship and its potentially detrimental effect on the identity and liberation of women, Drewitz may be seen to initiate an additional dimension to the myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone." In her novel, Gestern war Heute, the reader may observe Gabriele assisting her mother, Susanne, busy at work preparing coffee and bread for her father. Her own daughter Renate, however, reproaches Gabriele for giving up her job as a journalist to become a housewife. Her relation to food, the family and men is of a more utopian kind. In contrast to her younger sister, Claudia, who gets pregnant and marries and so may be seen to follow the patriarchal idyll of the couple, Renate is somewhat more of the rebellious type. She leaves home to join a student commune where all the responsibilities of the group are shared out equally amongst its members. This includes buying and fetching the groceries, the cooking and setting the table. It may be said that Renate

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[132]Beck and Martin, "Westdeutsche Frauenliteratur" 138.

has chosen an alternative lifestyle to escape the maternal destiny of her mother, and her mother's mother. However, not only has she abandoned her mother's sphere and the singularly limiting role as wife, mother and cook, it also appears that she is distanced from food as well. When her mother meets her later she notices that Renate looks miserable, thin and tired. Clearly she does not eat enough. Gabriele puts together a food parcel when she goes to visit Renate. She hides the chocolate under her daughter's pillow as the food is shared out between all the members of the commune. On another occasion she asks Renate if she has enough time to join her for a slice of cake or a sausage and salad. They end up going to a café to drink beer (because the coffee is awful) and eat some dried up "Boulette," a type of hamburger from Berlin made with minced meat, onions and breadcrumbs.

Regarding the earlier initiation of the myth of "the realm of food as a danger zone" to convey the analogous message of the lives of women as oppressed, it is interesting to note by way of conclusion how Drewitz does not evade the role mothers themselves play in the maintenance of the status quo and, at the same time, the new difficulties faced by the young pioneers of the women's movement. On the one hand, it appears that food remains Gabriele's only means of communicating her love or showing a mother's "uralte, bescheidene Zärtlichkeit."[133] By telling her daughter to

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[133]Drewitz, Gestern war Heute 375.

eat, however, it may be said that she is trying to bridge the gap between herself and her daughter in the only way she knows. She is also surreptitiously asking her to accept the way things are. Either way, this spells danger for Renate's autonomy as a woman. Indeed, throughout the novel mothers urge their daughters to eat (while usually going without themselves).

On the other hand, faced with the daunting prospect of surpassing her mother's own attempts at emancipation and creating her own sense of female identity without any precedent, Renate's liberation from the realm of food and her move towards political self-assertion is perhaps relativised by her apparent emaciation. In this respect, it seems Drewitz is hinting at a new daily reality (or perhaps sign) of "the realm of abandoning food." Indeed, the author appears to imply that those very gains made by women in recent times may well simultaneously contribute to the problem of creating a female identity in the separation and isolation of daughters from their mothers.

In the novel's final scene Renate is described demonstrating against torture in Argentina in the middle of a crowd of Saturday morning shoppers on Berlin's Wilmersdorfer Straße. Her protests, however, are ignored and she is drowned out - perhaps fittingly - by a sausage seller. Though this is the only image where men are directly related to the realm of food, not as consumers but as providers, it is somewhat ironic

that once again it is the voice of a woman which cannot be heard. Drewitz thus leaves the reader with the image that in spite of the efforts of female activists in exposing the structures of oppression and subjecting male dominated language and culture to the radically different standpoint of feminine experience, it appears that those structures - such as food, shopping, etc. - are still very much in place.

7. Ingeborg Drewitz's Das Hochhaus: The Family Meal and the Farce of Communion

Though food is a recurrent motif in Ingeborg Drewitz's urban novel, Das Hochhaus,[134] the reader hardly ever sees anyone actually eat. Instead of consuming food, Drewitz shows the characters shopping in a supermarket, making preparations before the meal, or clearing away the remains after having eaten. In this way, she manages to make the very actuality of human eating seem absent. The author is, therefore, able to suppress the individual's physiological need to eat and, simultaneously, emphasise the social aspect of people coming together. By peering beneath this social dimension of the scenes in which food and eating are described in the novel, and revealing the private concerns of the individuals involved, I will show Drewitz's intention to unveil the historical conditions which exist underneath the seemingly blissful image of human congregation and, thus, the personal isolation and insecurity it attempts to hide.

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[134]Published in 1975, Das Hochhaus follows the everyday lives of four young adolescents and their parents in a high-rise apartment building in West Berlin in the seventies. Susanne is twelve years old and has just moved to Berlin from Kassel with her parents, a company co-director and a housewife. Peter's artist father is serving a prison sentence in Tegel; his mother, who goes missing during the course of the novel, is a thirty-four-year-old shop assistant. Kalli is the midget eldest son of four, soon to be five, children of a Turkish immigrant family; his father is a bus driver. Jockel is fifteen years old and the son of a middle-aged script writer of little significance. The narration takes place over the period of one week from Friday through to the following Thursday.

As well as in the works' canteen and at the supermarket, food is most commonly described in the novel within the environment of the home. The discourse of food thus belongs very much to the domain of the family. One of the four homes examined by the author is that of a middle-aged script writer of little significance and his fifteen-year-old son, Jockel. The teenager is found sleeping under his father's car one morning by the care-taker after having stayed out all night. His anxious father immediately prepares a meal noticing that the boy looks so thin it is as if he were starving. However, the food the father buys and the meal he then prepares is befitting of a special family occasion; after all, they normally eat straight out of the pans and do not even bother using any plates. There is meatloaf, cake, ice cream, oranges, biscuits and red wine. Indeed, according to a culinary psychoanalysis similar to that frequently alluded to by Visser in her sociological study of the ordinary meal, the image which is offered is one of the perfect balance of warm (meat and oranges) and cold (ice cream and cake), dry (biscuits and wine) and moist (cake and oranges), the child-like (cake and ice cream) and the adult (meat and wine), and, finally, the red-blooded male (meat and wine) and the nurturing female (ice cream and oranges). With hours spent in the kitchen chopping up onions, slicing pickles and whipping the ice cream, it may be said that Jockel's father is presented as deliberately trying to transform reality into the image of communion with

the harmonising social appearances of food. Clearly having been preoccupied with a new script, he is now trying to make amends for neglecting his son.

It may be said that, in the terms of Barthes' theory of everyday mythologies, Drewitz is reflecting in this meal scene a socially engendered myth. Today, the meal is generally perceived within society at large as an occasion practiced since time immemorial when people come together supposedly on an equal footing. It may thus be considered an act of communion. Such a notion can be traced to the Christian Last Supper which provides Western society with the symbolic act of the meal as a dividing up the whole among all the individuals present. Once referred to a broader social context, this image of sharing-in-common conceals the ego-centric nature of an individual's physiological need to eat - a situation reflected in the fact that food consumed by one person can only be eaten exclusively by that person and not by any other.[135] However, the connotations of sharing and harmony when imposed upon the contemporary family meal must be seen as utter fabrication. The image of people coming together for the family meal is distorted within society by a particular sense of social togetherness or familial solidarity to convey the message of communion. However, this supposedly equitable exchange of thought about the dinner table masks the reality of an already existing social order. Indeed, where sociology is concerned,

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[135]See Simmel 243-244.

the structure of the meal actually reaffirms a particular social hierarchy. This is most pertinent in the realm of the traditional family where it is usually the father - and certainly always a parent - who holds the position of the highest rank. He sits at the head of the table, takes responsibility for the carving of the meat and supervises the subject matter of the conversation. This must surely reflect his position as the socio-economic and political head of the family and, therefore, his control over its centralised development. The remaining members of the family descend in rank in order of gender and age from other adult males to the mother and finally the children.

It is in light of this discrepancy between the "natural" sense of communion taken for granted by society in the image of the family meal and the existence of a clearly patriarchal structure within the family that one may regard the connotation of "communion" as the signification of a second order semiological system borne out in the primary language-system of the family meal. Referring to Barthes' terminology, the contemporary image of "the family meal" may be identified as the language object or signifier of a primary linguistic order. This may be seen in a similar vein to "the steak" in Barthes' Mythologies, as mentioned earlier. Just as the theorist maintained that "the steak" agrees with the arbitrary concept of "masculinity," so it is that the linguistic signifier of "the family meal" may be seen to correspond to

the social usage or linguistic signified of "physical togetherness" or "congregating." Certainly, the communal or family meal provides an opportunity to assure both the healthy physical growth and, more significantly, the centralised socio-political development of the family unit as a whole. Once again, much like "the masculinity of steak," one comes to understand the total of the signified and the signifier which in this case is the linguistic sign of "togetherness during the family meal."

This linguistic sign is then robbed of its autonomous history as a physical assembly and appropriated by society (which happens to be centralised and patriarchal) to serve as the mythical signifier of a secondary semiological order. Once again, this follows the pattern of Barthes' language of the "strength and masculinity of steak," the properties of which in the eyes of the homesick French traveller are, he maintains, appropriated due to the pangs of nostalgia to the very fact of being French. Indeed, it may be seen how the broader social form of the linguistic sign of "togetherness during the family meal" no longer represents the arbitrary concept of actually "physically coming or belonging together." Rather, it is driven by society's historical intention of maintaining the status quo. In this respect, the concept - or mythical signified - of "social togetherness" is motivated by the concerns of adults for disciplined order in general and society's obsession with ideological stability according to

family values in particular. As a result, the myth of "communion" is initiated by falsely relating the physical act of congregating with the notions of sharing-in-common, equality and universal understanding.

To return to the situation concerning Jockel and his father, the truth of the matter is that the boy, having been starved of paternal love and affection, has been spending the nights pursuing his adolescent sexual curiosity. His father, meanwhile, has been walking the city streets under the premise of searching for his son. However, the reader is informed that one evening the father comes across a pink poster and the graffiti of "die zottigen Würste."[136] He ends up in a gay bar. In their loneliness and confusion the two thus seem to be growing further apart. Instead of addressing their problems directly - why his son did not feel like returning home in the first place - and thereby rectifying their obvious inability to communicate with one another, it appears the father is hoping to make their relationship seem better by the "natural" sense of "togetherness" implied in "the family meal." In the absence of the boy's mother, he is anxious to show Jockel that he can be a competent father. Bearing in mind it is insinuated that the father is a homosexual, it may well be suggested that Drewitz intends this scene as a rather naive case of

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[136]Ingeborg Drewitz, Das Hochhaus. Roman (Stuttgart: Gebühr, 1975) 62.

hypercorrection: in other words, that he is also trying to be a competent mother.

Nonetheless, it may seem from this example that Jockel's father is attempting to invoke "the myth of communion" from "the togetherness" signified by "the family meal." This familial bliss and emotional harmony, however, is then immediately shown by Drewitz to fail. During the meal -the act of eating is avoided in the text - the father steadily becomes more and more drunk on the red wine. His effort to assert a sense of familial well-being breaks down and the appearance of communion he had been building up earlier literally disintegrates without any success into crumbs and a stain left by the red wine. These remnants represent his humiliating failure at being a capable father figure and to create a balanced family atmosphere. Grieving the loss of his wife and unable realistically to provide his son with the sense of belonging to a complete family unit, he is shown to compensate by following his tentative professional aspirations. He is also seen to hide behind the constructs of "the family meal." He is unable to express his true emotions or talk to his son about the facts of life, the reality of his own sexual orientation, or the absence of the wife and mother, that undeniable missing part of their family life which is only heightened by the void at the end of the meal. Whatever previously remained of the bond between father and son is finally destroyed after the meal. The father returns to the

kitchen to counter his intoxication by drinking some water, while Jockel reaches out to his classmate, Peter, in a letter of friendship, something his father seems unable to give.

It appears then that the social appropriation of the discourse of food is reflected by the author in the father's behaviour to extend or distort the sense of "physical togetherness" to imply "familial solidarity" in order to give the impression of "communion." This, however, is instantly revealed by Drewitz as an empty fabrication. She does not describe the act of eating, preferring instead to portray its preparation, and thus its social aspirations, and finally its catastrophic demise.

In Das Hochhaus, then, "the myth of communion" implied by the appropriated image of "togetherness during the family meal" is deliberately shattered each time it is invoked. The example provided by Jockel and his father is not the only such case. A parallel may be seen where Kalli's family is concerned. He is the midget eldest son of a Turkish immigrant family. Though the family always sits down together at mealtimes, the meals themselves are arranged according to the father's work schedule: he is a bus driver. Indeed, the family is organized entirely according to a patriarchal structure. Whereas the father is considered the head of the family and goes out to work, it is the mother's job to fetch the groceries, prepare all the meals, tend to the children, do the laundry and darn her husband's clothes. She is often shown

peeling potatoes, a task also occasionally performed by Kalli. Once again, it is the father of the immigrant family who seems to extend the sense of physical "togetherness during the family meal" to imply the more social connotation of familial unity or "the myth of communion." On one occasion, while eating a meal consisting of potatoes and gravy, Kalli's father advises his son not to be misguided by the pretentious and immoral high-earning Berliners. The boy is told that he would do better to stick to his "own kind" and his family in particular. The father is thus imploring a sense of solidarity as Turks.

However, this image is invoked by Drewitz only then to be destroyed at a later point in the text. Indeed, the father may well be regarded as a hypocrite in that he fails to do as he preaches. The question arises why it is that in the former West Berlin, a city with the largest population of Turks outside Turkey itself, and thus with an adequate provision of Turkish-owned stores selling traditional foodstuffs, Kalli's family nonetheless persistently eats only in a non-Turkish way. The family's never changing diet consists of onions, a generic "meat," potatoes and gravy. Later again the father eats a more particularly German sandwich prepared for him by his wife and made of rye bread and liver sausage paste. It appears that the German bread, as opposed to its equivalent Turkish pita bread, or "Fladenbrot," is instilled with the welcome connotation of strength: "Er genießt [...] das

kräftige Roggenbrot."[137] By refraining from a traditional Turkish diet and choosing to eat more typically German food,[138] it may seem that the father conforms to local customs in order to convey the appearance of having integrated socially. So it is that the sense of "communion" as Turks dictated during "the family meal" is thus a farce as Drewitz shows the father contradicting his own advice. While he ignores his son's aspirations to be accepted into German society, it may be revealed that the father himself is making every effort to assimilate. Once again there appears to be a breakdown in communication between the members of the family as the father attempts to hide his own desire to be accepted by others in the construct of "the family meal." In this case, "the myth of communion" is revealed by Drewitz as a falsehood designed specifically to mask social inequality and marginalisation grounded on matters of race.

A similar pattern may be seen where Peter is concerned. Peter lives alone with his mother, a thirty-four-year-old shop

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[137]Drewitz, Das Hochhaus 212.

[138]I am fully aware that there is no such thing as a German national cuisine and that culinary traditions in "Germany" have developed on a strictly regional basis: perogies from East Prussia; "Grüne Soße" from Frankfurt; "Eisbein mit Sauerkraut" from Berlin; "Spätzle" from Swabia; "Birnen, Bohnen und Speck" from Bremen and "Rievkoochen" from Cologne. However any non-German would also maintain that there is a certain perception beyond the borders of Germany as to what could be termed generically as German food: "Wurst," "Sauerkraut," "Bratkartoffeln," rye bread or pumpernickel, German mustard, German beer, "Kaffee und Kuchen" and waffles, are but a few examples.

assistant, while his artist father is serving a prison sentence in Tegel. One evening the boy barricades himself into the family apartment to protect the home as his mother has not returned and he fears that someone will come to take him away. The next day when it is all too apparent that something serious is amiss, the distraught Peter begins to reminisce about the time when his parents were together. He recalls the image of familial bliss as his mother passes her dessert across the dining table to his father. This memory overrides any recollection of what his parents actually said to one another. A sickeningly sentimental picture of his parents is thus evoked by Peter apparently to soothe him in his moment of need. The mythical quality of "togetherness during the family meal" can once again be seen to supply a sense of "communion." This construct, of course, is immediately shown by Drewitz to be a cruel falsehood called upon to repress the unpleasant reality of isolation and the sacrifices of the adult world. The mother's gesture alludes to the reality that the woman of the family is prepared to sacrifice her own life - Peter's mother had wanted to have more children so that they would be "a real family" - to fulfil the needs of her husband and children.

It may be said that by referring "the myth of communion" directly back to the language object of "the family meal" and not to the image of reality appropriated by society, or "the togetherness of the family meal," the author is seen to

dismantle the myth and reveal it as an impossible situation. This process resembles Barthes' description of "revolutionary myth" or "Myth on the Left."[139] Though he dismisses this mechanism as "fully political" and "real," and therefore too obvious or outspoken to be regarded in the same light as the more covert operations of bourgeois myth, in the context of Drewitz's novel, it provides this study with a model to show how the author essentially abolishes myth. By imposing a third order, or the literary level of farce, upon the secondary semiological order, or social "myth of communion," the author speaks clearly about the existence of myth, turns it about and revokes it.

This third level may consequently be regarded as the process of "demystification." Drewitz appears to steal back the "myth of communion" from the secondary semiological order. This is achieved by emptying it of its distorted meaning of "social togetherness" motivated by the historical intention of maintaining the status quo according to family values. The author's tactics are therefore identical to the process of distortion undertaken at the social level. Here, the sign of the primary linguistic order was initially appropriated to serve as an accomplice to the ideological ends of the concept of "social togetherness." The lie or "myth of communion" was thus established by falsely equating the physical act of coming together with the notion of sharing-in-common. As a

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[139]See Barthes, Mythologies 145-148.

result of Drewitz's literary (re)appropriation, however, "the myth of communion" becomes the signifier of a third order. Once emptied of its mythical intention, it must be seen to refer back again to the original usage signified by the language object of "the family meal:" namely, "togetherness." Nevertheless, seeing as the author is herself motivated by her own historical intention of revealing the discrepancy in understanding between adults and children, the new signifier of "the communion of the family meal" now corresponds to the new signified or concept of "false togetherness." In this way, Drewitz reveals the equation of the physical act of coming together with the notion of sharing as a falsehood. Furthermore, the author may be considered as a mythologist as she uncovers the new signification of "the farce of communion."

The disclosure of this discrepancy by the intentional destruction of "the myth of communion" is demonstrated most explicitly in the meal scene in Susanne's family at the end of the novel. As the following quotation reveals, this meal is the rehearsed performance of familial bliss and bourgeois correctness:

> Und da hat Mutter zum Essen gerufen.
> Vater saß schon am Tisch. Die Bestecke lagen neben den Tellern, die Schüsseln für den Nachtisch standen halblinks von den Tellern, die Gläser halbrechts, Flaschen mit Selters und Trauben- und Orangensaft standen auf einem kleinen Tischchen,

> die Mutter sagte wie jeden Tag: Ratet, was ich im Ofen (im Topf, auf der Pfanne) habe![140]

The cutlery and crockery have been arranged according to accepted custom. The serving bowls and glasses counter-balance one another perfectly. The bottles of mineral water and choice of fruit juices are poised asymmetrically to the main table. Finally, the mother plays her little guessing game to whet the appetite. Thus the reader witnesses the scene of the perfect family unit! However, the atmosphere is staged and stifling. There is no room for freedom or genuine variety.

The familiar image of this somewhat monotonous stability may be analysed as a cover up whereby the cultural appearance of "the family meal" provides "a sense of togetherness" which, in turn, is intentionally invoked to give the impression of "communion." This image of mutual understanding and equitable order is used within the society parodied by the author to obscure the emotional distress of the individual members of the family. Drewitz then undertakes to expose this mechanism. As soon as Susanne's father comes home from work her mother conceals a whisper - that she is having difficulties with Susanne - with the secret code and exaggerated proclamation: "Ich habe was Leckeres im Ofen!"[141] In the context of Drewitz's novel, then, the image of "the communion of the family meal" can thus be seen to relate to a "false

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[140]Drewitz, Das Hochhaus 240.

[141]Drewitz, Das Hochhaus 235.

togetherness." As the mother's little game and exaggerated proclamation begins to indicate, "the myth of communion" is but a "farce."

Her husband plays along with the harmonising ritual hazarding a guess that the food might be perogies. Instead she has prepared "Quarkkeilchen," a modest peasant dish from Saxony made from curd cheese formed into wedge shapes, and "Plinsen," a type of crêpe.[142] She constructs an entire conversation about the dish explaining how it can be eaten with either caster sugar, pears or an onion sauce. She then digresses onto the subject of luxurious feasts and the wisdom of modesty learnt from such old customs as the food before them. Indeed, Susanne's mother may be seen to reappropriate the common discourse of traditional food of the peasant family - its resourcefulness and adaptability, its nutritional value and social function as a modest communion. It becomes an aesthetic support to her position in the family in that it seems to subscribe to the preservation of the present centralised structure of society. Her conversation is apparently informed and, by analogy, evidently lays claim to its prestigious subject matter of the wisdom of family values.

However, the meal is clearly a pretence. The mother's table talk is designed specifically to avoid the real problems at hand. Just as in the comfort of her middle-class home it would be ridiculous to suggest that she would ever have to

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[142]Drewitz, Das Hochhaus 235.

learn the modest ways of the peasantry - the frivolities of the dinner party at the beginning of the book is evidence enough of this - so it is that the emotional crisis disturbing her daughter is felt to be equally incongruous to the family's lifestyle. The subject of the disappearance of Peter's mother, the removal of the boy himself to a home, and the subsequent loss for Susanne of one of her friends, is thus avoided. There is a clear discrepancy between Susanne's perspective and that of her parents. Though she would prefer to discuss the events taking place in her building, her father insists: it is not their place to care about the plight of others. Here it may be seen while "the communion of the family meal" does not actually deny the presence of social and emotional problems, it does not assist the exchange of thought, either. Its purpose is to convince Susanne to conform to her parents' way of thinking and, therefore, believe in their privileged position in society. The "communion of the family meal" itself now signifies a "false togetherness" and may be demystified as a "farce."

Susanne is nauseated by the food and her mother's conversation about it. She refuses to be convinced by her mother's airs and rejects the food. To her the food bears no pretentions to wisdom or modesty: it is merely a product of milk that has curdled, or turned sour. She finds it impossible to glaze over the outside world and particularly the events taking place in her building. Ironically, her refusal to eat

draws attention to her physiological need to eat and thus shatters the socialisation of the food. Consequently, the mother's trite conversation, the entire façade of familial "togetherness" and the subsequent "myth of communion" break down into the mocking scene of domestic chaos. The mother is forced to confront the truth: as she complains that Susanne is becoming thin, she ironically compares her daughter to the woman who has disappeared. The reward for finally disclosing the source of Susanne's fears and isolation (for she will now lose her friend, Peter) is literally to have the food she prepared thrown back in her face.

Finally, Susanne's father attempts to restore the peace by explaining to her that they, her parents, are trying to prevent her from being devoured by the real world of the city. He suggests that only her family can provide her with the protection of "belonging together." This same sentiment has already been expressed by Kalli's father. It is also that feeling so desired by Jockel and Peter. However, as Drewitz's treatment of the subtext of food has revealed, "the myth of communion" supplied by the familial sense of "togetherness" is an illusion.

The shopping for, preparation of, and final consumption of food is shown in Das Hochhaus to play an integral part in the maintenance of the social status quo by proliferating a sense of "communion." This social and emotional harmony is initiated in order to conceal the chaos and repression which

enables such a centralised society to survive in the first place. Unlike the works by Thomas Mann, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Martin Walser, which I have already discussed in this study, it appears that the lie of myth is not working smoothly in this novel by Drewitz. It is, on the contrary, exposed due to the author's intention to explore the unique dichotomy between the unpretentious perspective of a child and the complex, multicoded and politically centralised world of adults.

8. Conclusion

The four myths discussed in this work - justice, immortality, danger and the farce of communion - all display a negative attitude towards food. Dürrenmatt draws upon the grotesquely terrifying images of excess. Walser alludes to recklessness, guilt and death. The two works by Drewitz refer to monotony and oppression, and superficiality, distrust and isolation, respectively. In this light, it may be noted that the literary usage of the phenomenon of food and eating acts as a parallel to contemporary society's own troubled interaction with the subject of food. Today, the problems of food seem to be everywhere. The numbers of people suffering from eating disorders such as anorexia, or bulimia, and obesity appear to be ever on the increase. Certainly modern society is steeped in confusion when confronting the types and quantities of salt, sugar, fibre, vitamins, acids, fats and cholesterol the individual should be consuming on a daily basis. In addition, while the developed West is saturated with the concepts of convenience food, health bars and exclusive restaurants, over-farming and food-mountains, the under-developed and developing world still faces outbreaks of famine on epidemic proportions. Whether one is dealing with an abundance or a lack of food, the message appears to be the same: food spells danger and death.

In spite of the daunting omnipresence of food in modern Western society, it may be said that the individual is further distanced from the physiological fact of food and eating. One is less concerned with food as sustenance than as a social event. It is a family occasion, a fashion statement, a means of socialising, a business venture, an economic policy, and so on. It is therefore connected with the notions of identity, authority, hierarchy and power. Indeed, it appears that whoever commands the language of food, may well control the way people behave and think.

In this respect, the myths examined may be considered as extreme points on a broad spectrum of possibilities. They are by no means the only ideological distortions of the language of food. Barthes, in his study alone, identified the food mythologies of the cultural supremacy of wine, the French greatness of steak, and the social attainment of photographs of recipes in glossy magazines. Indeed, Barthes would maintain that there is no limit to the possible transmutations of any sign system. Food and eating scenes are found in numerous modern novels, such as works by Günter Grass, Thomas Bernhard, Alfred Kölleritsch, Paul Kersten, Thomas Hürlimann, Horst Bienek, to name but a few. In the realm of literature, then, there is a great potentiality for many mythical appropriations of food, each one differing from any other according to the ideological standpoint of the author or work in question.

The four myths identified in this study not only contain a different message from one another - derived from various aspects of food - they also function in distinct ways depending on the author's intention. It may be said that in Dürrenmatt's Der Richter und sein Henker the author consciously exploits an image. Here, the mythical appropriation of "a victorious amount of food" to convey the message of "the justice of eating a lot" is initiated to reinforce the theme of social justice. Meanwhile, it appears that Walser employs the myth of "immortality when eating good food" derived from the sign of "the health and aptitude of good food" as a plot device to explore further the apparently conflicting personalities of the characters of his novel Ein fliehendes Pferd and, thus, to show that neither is necessarily right or wrong. Ingeborg Drewitz's two novels, Gestern war Heute and Das Hochhaus, offer two further applications of myth in literature. The first reappropriates the (biased) language of food which enforces the notion that "a woman's place is in the kitchen" in order to liberate the truth of the particularly feminine experience of the realm of food as a structure of oppression or "danger zone." The latter reflects the social myth of "the communion of the family meal" with the express intention of unmasking it as an utter "farce." In each case, then, whether to enforce or to expose a lie, the mythical level is established on entirely political, or ideological, grounds.

A study of the mythological structures initiated within literary texts, therefore, touches upon the inner workings of the very process of writing literature. Considering that food is but one of the incalculable number of language-systems parodied, or plagiarised, from a pre-existent world by an author, it may well be said, as indeed Bakhtin seems to maintain, that a novel, constructed out of a selection of language-systems, is an individual collection of reappropriated styles. Similarly, it may be regarded as a dialogue, that is, the product of the objectification of an author's own artistic intention in the other-languageness of the world.

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